

1997

# Feminist Issues in "Scarecrow and Mrs. King" and in "Lois and Clark".

Sharon E. Broussard

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_disstheses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses)

---

## Recommended Citation

Broussard, Sharon E., "Feminist Issues in "Scarecrow and Mrs. King" and in "Lois and Clark"." (1997). *LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses*. 232.

[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_disstheses/232](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/232)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# **UMI**

**A Bell & Howell Information Company**  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA  
313/761-4700 800/521-0600



**FEMINIST ISSUES IN  
SCARECROW AND MRS. KING  
AND IN LOIS AND CLARK**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Mass Communication**

**in**

**Theanship School of Mass Communication**

**by**

**Sharon E. Broussard**

**B.A., Louisiana Scholars' College at Northwestern State University, 1991  
December 1997**

**UMI Number: 1390772**

**Copyright 1998 by  
Broussard, Sharon E.**

**All rights reserved.**

---

**UMI Microform 1390772  
Copyright 1998, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized  
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

---

**UMI**  
**300 North Zeeb Road**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis was made possible with the help and patience of many people. Primarily, I would like to thank my Committee members for their guidance and input and for believing that this project was worthwhile.

Dr. Robin Roberts was especially helpful in this thesis. Her class on "Women in Television" inspired me to select this topic. I learned many things about television, women on television, and how I look at women on television in her class and in this research. Robin's patience with me and her attempts to get me to "focus and analyze" will never be forgotten.

I would also like to acknowledge my husband, Kevin, who put up with many hours alone while I researched, theorized, and typed. In addition, he let me discuss my ideas with him and provided me with many insightful points.

A special thank-you goes to Ms. Marilyn Zaitoon, who allowed me access to her Lois and Clark video library. Without her, half of this research would have been impossible.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Methodology Used In This Study.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Shows Themselves.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Looking at Amanda King and Lois Lane.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Amanda and Lois: An Overview.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Female-Female Relationships</b>	
<b>Female Friends/Co-workers/Acquaintances.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Mothers.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Female-Male Relationships</b>	
<b>Fathers and Surrogate Fathers.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Male Friends/Co-workers.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Romantic involvements.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Professional Relationships and Power Issues.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Summary and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Vita.....</b>	<b>115</b>

Broussard, Sharon E., B.A., Louisiana Scholars' College at Northwestern State University, 1991  
Master of Mass Communication, Fall Commencement, 1997  
Major: Mass Communication  
Feminist Issues in *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* and in *Lois and Clark*  
Thesis directed by Dr. Ronald Garay and Dr. Robin Roberts  
Pages in thesis, 119. Words in Abstract, 208.

## ABSTRACT

"Feminist Issues in Scarecrow and Mrs. King and in Lois and Clark" looks at television portrayals of female leads in the female-male investigative team. The two series, which aired ten years apart, were chosen for their escapist and fantasy qualities. One hypothesis of this research was that the latter show, Lois and Clark, would exhibit more feminist tendencies.

Episodes from each series were examined for events and dialogue significant to the presentation of the female lead. These events and dialogue were arranged into four categories: female-female relationships, female-male relationships, romantic involvements, and professional relationships. An encompassing element was also addressed in each category: the feminine experience and knowledge.

The research finds that relationships play a significant role in the development of Amanda King and Lois Lane. The feminine experience and knowledge that Amanda has and Lois lacks is a catalyst for these relationships. Amanda's feminine experience allows her to develop healthy relationships and progress from a submissive housewife figure to an independent career woman. Lois' lack of feminine experience results in the opposite: she is unable to form healthy relationships and becomes dependent on her male partner, Clark, for emotional and professional support. In other words, she regresses from an independent career woman to a submissive housewife figure.



## **Introduction**

*"Whether or not television 'reflects' reality  
outside the tube is beside the point:  
we watch television and it is therefore part of life."  
(Bonnie Dow, Prime-Time Feminism, 5)*

Television has become a part of culture. Because of its hegemonic and ideological qualities, television has come under much scrutiny from feminists. The concepts of ideology and a related term, hegemony, go back to the 1920s and 30s, with Gramsci's studies of Fascism in Europe. For the purposes of this thesis, *ideology* is the set of beliefs that form a particular culture or society and *hegemony* is the means by which ideology is promoted, that is, the exaltation of the "acceptable" lifestyles of that society's citizens. Fiske cites Gitlin's account of ideology as "that process whereby the subordinate are led to consent to the system that subordinates them...to view the social system and its everyday embodiments as 'common sense'." (*Television Culture*, 40) In other words, ideology is the "information" that is distributed in the hegemonic process. According to Press, Mannheim offers the best sociological definition of ideology as "beliefs promoted by the ruling elites in order to maintain and perpetuate their position of dominance." (*Women Watching Television*, 198) These beliefs, as they are based on patriarchal values, are detrimental to women. Especially harmful are the images of women on television – often stereotypical – that uphold the dominant ideology of women as physically and mentally inferior to men. The constant bombardment of the public with certain images serves to

reinforce the ideological system already in place. Feminism sets out to dispel many of these ideological beliefs by questioning social values and how they are reinforced. For purposes of this project, feminism can be defined as the struggle for equality between the sexes — politically, socially, and economically. Feminism advocates the freedom for women to engage in traditionally masculine pursuits.

On television, this freedom is not always available to female characters. For those female characters who are paired with a male counterpart, their consignment to the submissive role is especially delineated. One such pairing is the male-female investigative team. The sub-genre of male-female crime-fighting duos on television promotes male superiority, as the most common premise is the female accidentally discovering the crimes but never actually solving them.

As Woollacott states, the study of a television genre can be valuable because of its underlying ideology. Understanding the audience of a particular television genre can reveal what ideological principles are most acceptable to particular social groups. In other words, a person's taste in television programming reflects how that person feels about the society in which she or he lives.

Dow, Fiske, and Press argue that certain genres can become associated with an ideology and that not all television genres, nor all series within a genre, support the dominant ideology of male patriarchy. For example, sitcoms are

known to be a breeding ground for resistant ideologies (through making fun of or laughing at established institutions), soap operas promote a traditionally feminine ideal (with the beautiful, thin women who have time for a family and a career, although these women never seem to actually work at their jobs), and action programs feed the alleged male desire for explosions and car chases ("Fictions and Ideologies," 169, 175; Television Culture, 150-151, 161). The fantasy/action/romance type of series can be significant because of its escapism, offering a hope of a different (i.e., more exciting or fulfilling) life. I agree with Rhonda Wilcox who says that television shows such as Moonlighting, Remington Steele, and Lois and Clark "with the lesser exemplars such as Scarecrow and Mrs. King and the Shelley Hack vehicle Jack and Mike" ("Dominant Female, Superior Male," 27) could constitute a sub-genre.

Understanding the ideology of a television genre can help in understanding why that particular genre (or television program) is popular — "Given that genres themselves constitute specific articulations of ideological and formal elements, it would seem to follow that shifts in the dominant articulating principle would be registered in the area of popular fiction by the increased popularity of appropriate genre articulations." ("Fictions and Ideologies," p. 177) As the popularity of genres seems to be cyclical, it may follow that they exemplify the argument that television reflects rather than influences culture. However, the argument of whether television influences or reflects society is too broad of an issue for discussion in a single paper; hence, it will not be addressed here.

What will be discussed is how feminist issues are addressed in Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark, two shows that feature a male-female team working together in an investigative capacity.

While shows featuring a male-female crime fighting team reached a zenith in the 1980s, with shows such as Moonlighting, Remington Steele, Hart to Hart, this type of show is nearly as old as television itself. The first such series - Mr. and Mrs. North, based on the movie of the same name – ran from 1952-53 on CBS and from 1953-54 on NBC. The series, set in New York's Greenwich Village, focused on Jerry North, a detective turned publisher, and his wife Barbara who "stumbles" onto crimes. In 1966, the short-lived spinoff The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. appeared, starring Stefanie Powers, well-known for her later role in Hart to Hart. McMillan and Wife had a run of 5 years, from 1971-1976, during the height of second wave feminism. This popular male-female crime drama signified the female merely as "wife" – a definition based on patriarchal values. The series' synopsis from *The Encyclopedia of Television* describes the show as "The exploits of Steward 'Mac' McMillan, the Police Commissioner of San Francisco, and his *pretty wife* Sally a *girl* with a knack for finding trouble" (emphasis mine). This description shows how television portrayals can seem to be behind actual social conditions. These types of television plots continue the promotion of male dominance despite feminist advances in the real world, through continuing portrayals of intelligent, strong men working with slightly less intelligent, weak women.

Although neither Scarecrow and Mrs. King nor Lois and Clark technically fit into the "crime drama" genre, they do both focus on the male/female crime-fighting teams: Lee Stetson and Amanda King in Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois Lane, Clark Kent and Superman in Lois and Clark. Both series are seemingly light viewing but offer significant portrayals of the female. These shows are the kind that are initially viewed for entertainment, then prompt questions about social roles through character portrayal. Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark have a strong touch of fantasy and humor and illustrate the pleasure role of a text that is specifically directed at a female audience. They follow the schemata of Andrea Press' "plot that promises to detail the adventures of a unique, individual woman but that actually tells a story which has been told many times before and proceeds in a fashion extremely predictable to its readers." (*Women Watching Television*, 25) In each series, the focus on romance between the two leads follows a basic formula -- boy meets girl, they spend lots of time together, and after misunderstandings and dalliances with others, they admit their feelings for each other (usually in the face of a crisis). A feminist critic might criticize this type of plot for propagating male-dominating ideology. Recently, such formulas have been considered worth studying because of these genres' target female audiences.

The polysemic nature of television text allows subcultures to read resistant messages into mainstream television programs. John Fiske, in *Television Culture*, argues that television texts are "read" differently by people,

according to their sex, race, class, or any number of cultural factors. These cultural factors can place various meanings on a scene in a program, a whole program, or a whole series. Instead of a dominant ideology being promoted by a television program, a person not "privileged" enough to be part of that dominant ideology can critically view the program. This mode of viewing reinforces already existent resistant thoughts to the status quo. In other words, television programs that appear to support the male-oriented ideal of society can be used to resist that ideal, although often in a subtle manner.

## **Methodology Used In This Study**

Following are terms used throughout this study and their definitions – drawn from various readings and personal experience – as they apply to this particular research and analysis:

<b>feminine knowledge/experience:</b>	experiences and knowledge that are traditionally considered "natural" to the female; related to domestic and housekeeping routines, childbirth and childcare, basic nurturing and caretaking functions
<b>feminism:</b>	a movement or attitude that argues that females are wrongfully treated as inferior to males, in social, economic, cultural, and political realms. The dominant ideology (see below) propagates this treatment through the favorable portrayal of subjected females in all forms of media.
<b>masculine and feminine actions (traditional):</b>	these are actions based on tradition and stereotypes, such as the man being the provider and performing actions that require physical strength; feminine actions include nurturing and domestic abilities (see <i>feminine knowledge/experience</i> ).
<b>pleasure and fantasy roles:</b>	the role of television texts to enable the viewer to escape from everyday life and step into a world far

	removed from ordinary situations. this escape enables the viewer to place herself or himself in a fictional situation without real-life consequences.
polysemic:	the quality of a text that enables readers to derive meaning from that text based on their various backgrounds, cultures and social positions
post-feminism:	a movement or attitude in which females accept the gains made by feminism, but feel that the gains that have been made are sufficient in defining equality between the sexes; many females who hold this opinion make a conscious effort to avoid the label "feminist"
traditional feminine role:	one in which the female is subjected to the male by means of physical strength, placement in a inferior position in the workplace, or made too busy by housekeeping and child-rearing to be involved in other pursuits
dominant ideology:	that which puts the control of society, economy, and culture in the hands of white males and maintains this <i>status quo</i>

Drawing on these concepts, I examined two television series and how they illustrate gender issues through a comparative study of Scarecrow & Mrs. King (1983-87) and Lois and Clark (1993-1997). In these shows, I focus on the presentation of the female in a male-female "crime-fighting" partnership. Specific examination was made of the relationships in which the female lead of each show is placed in, how she reacts to those relationships, and how the relationships themselves affect her. I proposed that the relationships of Amanda and of Lois define each character in terms of her feminine knowledge and experience. In addition, I proposed that these relationships define power parameters that allow for development of the female character. My initial thesis

was that these relationships contribute to Amanda's progression from a mild-mannered housewife to a full-fledged spy, while they contribute to Lois' regression from a top-notch reporter to a passive team member. For ease in writing and reading this thesis, the terms "Amanda" and "Lois" denote the created roles themselves, the lines spoken by the characters, and the actions taken by the characters; in other words, reference to the characters also includes reference to the writers and producers of the scripts.

The examination of the two series was a textual analysis of each of the series, and then they will be compared for similarities or dissimilarities. It might be expected that Lois and Clark would show that females in a male-female crime-fighting team are presented in a stronger, more positive light than in Scarecrow and Mrs. King. What I expected and found, however, is that Lois and Amanda offer two extremely different outcomes to female-male pairing on television.

The textual analysis was done on approximately 20 - 25 episodes of each series, a sample that represents approximately one-fourth of the total episodes. The analysis involved myself viewing randomly selected episodes and noting instances (pertinent to the plot or storyline) within each episode that address the female lead's ability to function within her work environment. This ability derives from the strength of relationships in the life of the female lead, since these relationships offer her experience and knowledge different from what she traditionally possesses. Other instances that will be noted are those that deal



with the female lead's "feminine issues" such as child care, homemaking, relationships, etc. (again, when pertinent to the plot or storyline of the episode). These events will then be analyzed for their significance to feminist issues — whether the male-female investigative relationship (on both a personal and professional level) promotes or discredits feminism. This will be done in a narrative form with a brief synopsis of each analyzed episode included in an appendix.

## The Shows Themselves

Scarecrow and Mrs. King aired during the mid-1980s at the height of Reaganism and "New Conservatism" ("I Spy...", 66), coinciding with the rise of post-feminism. Women were beginning to enjoy the rewards of the feminist movement, yet many were reluctant to identify themselves as feminists. Some of these same women even blamed feminism for the problems that still faced their gender. Amanda King appears to be a post-feminist character, a housewife who is trying to make a living to support herself and her two sons. She inadvertently becomes involved with "the Agency,"<sup>1</sup> an ultra-covert governmental organization; as one agent puts it, "the CIA has a turnoff sign at 495, we don't." ("All the World's a Stage") Amanda is partnered with Lee Stetson, an agent who has traveled to exotic places and speaks several languages; in other words, Amanda's cultural and social opposite. As with most male-female crime series,

---

<sup>1</sup> not the CIA, as I have found erroneously stated in several articles about the male-female crime-fighting television series.

Amanda has an antithesis of sorts in Francine, the supposed "career woman;" however, over the course of the series, Francine becomes more and more like the traditional female, slipping into the role of the department chief's secretary/assistant while Amanda spends more time out in the field with Lee. Amanda's rise as a "strong" figure could be translated in a post-feminist sense that the traditional feminine figure becomes more important than the liberated female; however, the fact that Amanda is stepping into a traditionally masculine role shows that she is attempting to move into a position of equality with Lee Stetson. Her move into equality acknowledges male-female inequality and the need for corrective action. The move also indicates the strength of the female to stake a claim of equality.

Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman updates the Superman story for the 1990s. This incarnation of the legend concentrates on the relationship between Clark Kent and Lois Lane. In Lois and Clark, Lois is an established character and Clark is a newcomer, meaning that Lois Lane's existence at the Daily Planet as an ace reporter precedes the arrival of Clark Kent. This "pre-existence" places the character of Lois in a more powerful position than the previous incarnations of Lois. Lois herself emphasizes her own experience and journalism awards and very openly expresses her exasperation at being paired with the "farm boy" from Kansas. Like Amanda, Lois has a feminine antithesis in Catherine Grant, the society columnist (at least for the first season). Catherine, or "Cat," portrays the gossipy female whose life's goal is to

catch a well-heeled man with the right social connections. Cat is a polar opposite of Lois, whose own sister tells her, "you don't have dates, you have interviews." ("Pilot") Lois focuses so much on her career that she has no time for a personal life, a common post-feminist argument against the effects of feminism. However, in the workplace, Lois feels she is in control and unlike Amanda, she has nothing to prove to her male partner – she is presumed to be his equal, if not superior. Lois' attempts to fulfill her career desires and develop a social life away from that career replaces the struggle for equality between the sexes.

Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark share a similarity of improbability – in the "real" world, there are female detectives vis-à-vis Laura Holt and Maddie Hayes, while housewives-turned-spies are uncommon and men don't really fly. Through the forum of pleasure and fantasy, two female images are being presented: one traditionally feminine (Amanda) and the other strong and independent (Lois). The question for this research will be how the portrayal of these images address feminist issues. It initially appears that contemporary programs address feminist issues more than programs that aired fifteen to twenty years ago, based on the increase in female-based shows (Roseanne, Grace Under Fire, NBC's all-female Monday night line-up). However, it may be discovered that little progress has been made in the ten years between these two series themselves. This feminist progression, or lack thereof, could serve as a reminder or caution light to television writers and producers when and if the

genre of male-female crime-fighting teams comes back to television – since the popularity of television genres does appear to be cyclical. This research could indicate what the next male-female crime-fighting duo will be like, or more ideally, what the next male-female crime-fighting duo *should* be like.

## Looking at Amanda King and Lois Lane

An examination of Amanda King will show that she can be analyzed in feminist terms through the “difference” theory. Difference theory promotes the transference of traditionally feminine values and characteristics into the working sector. Post-feminists grasped this argument for its nostalgic qualities – the responsibilities of the home are merely replaced in the office in what Dow calls “public housekeeping.” (*Prime-Time Feminism*, 169) Amanda is the primary bread-winner in her household, and she does show instances of anxiety when her home life and her “spy career” clash. Most of this anxiety is due to keeping her job a secret, but this anxiety still addresses the problem of the woman having to keep house while having a career. Amanda’s activity in many socially-conscious groups is seen in such episodes as “Over the Limit” and “Vigilante Mothers” in which the plots revolve around her involvement with these groups. She is also progressively-minded, resourceful, and ambitious, as seen in her determination to go through the training course at the Agency and become a full-fledged spy. I argue that Amanda does not merely transfer her mothering and housekeeping abilities to the Agency; what actually occurs is those very skills, but mostly the traditionally feminine **knowledge** (recipes, entertaining, civic

leadership), lead to the solution of the case, combining the realms of masculine and feminine accomplishments. This combination also breaks down the barriers of masculine-feminine action. If a traditionally feminine action can be successfully performed in a traditional masculine setting, then the action doesn't necessarily have to be considered "feminine," and vice versa.

While Amanda appears to exemplify the traditional housewife, Lois Lane of Lois and Clark appears to represent a strong, independent female. Even the title of the show emphasizes the updated focus of the Superman legend: Lois of Lois and Clark, not Clark and Lois or Superman and Lois or Superman and Clark or even just plain Superman. But where Amanda becomes more confident and self-reliant during the run of Scarecrow and Mrs. King, Lois becomes more "feminized," that is, she loses her focus in her career and replaces her ambition with the desire to have a house with a white picket fence and children playing in the yard. This transition may have been part of the reason for the departure of the character of Cat Grant after the first season. The stereotypical feminine qualities Cat initially represented were ridiculed by Lois, but were later incorporated into Lois' character. A major point in Lois and Clark – that of the dual identity of Clark/Superman – also undermines the portrayal of Lois Lane as a ambitious, determined, and independent woman. One of the best villains of the series, Tempus, asks – "how galactically stupid is she?!" ("Tempus Fugitive"). This question refers to the fact that a simple pair of glasses kept Lois (not to mention everyone else) from recognizing Clark as Superman. That an

investigative reporter whose job it is to expose corruption and conspiracy, no matter how well concealed, could be fooled by a single accessory is even less plausible than a housewife becoming a secret agent. Neither does this same award-winning investigative reporter ever notice that Superman and Clark Kent are never seen together. Lois' naiveté reinforces the old-fashioned idea of the strong male protecting the fragile and clueless female.

## Literature Review

This study is modeled after two works that also address feminine issues within a narrative text. In *Prime-Time Feminism*, Bonnie Dow looks at how television has reflected the women's movement since 1970. She selects five programs featuring female lead characters -- The Mary Tyler Moore Show, One Day at a Time, Designing Women, Murphy Brown, and Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman -- and analyzes the text of each program to determine how they reflect changes in the attitudes of and toward women on television. Dow then relates these attitudes to the social attitudes contemporary to the shows. This is the method that I followed in my analysis of Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark.

The second work, *Folk Roots and Mythic Wings*, does not address female portrayal on television, but it does present the importance of narrative text as a cultural indicator. In this book, Marilyn Sanders Mobley analyzes the way in which narrative text reflects and influences cultural and societal beliefs.

In 1974, Nancy Tedesco studied the portrayal of women on prime time television. "Patterns in Prime Time," done during the height of feminism, found that in television, women are less powerful than men, are cast more often in comic or light roles, and are more likely the victim of violence than men. A little over a decade later, Diana Reep and Faye Dambrot did several studies on the portrayal of working women on television. As mentioned earlier, a significant number of male-female crime-fighting team television series aired in the 1980s. Consequently this became a topic of feminist examination, especially since these shows seemed to present strong female characters with as much power in the relationship as the male.

In 1987, Reep and Dambrot continued this line of thought in "Having It All?". They studied the portrayal of women on television during the late 1970s and early 1980s and found that women on television with careers are reflective of women in the real world in their concerns about work and the variety of careers portrayed. The most significant findings of this particular study center around issues that feminists feel are still products of the dominant ideology. Of all the issues that could be addressed with television characters of working women, the most predominant one was that women's professional success interfered with attaining a successful marriage; this is part of a broader condition presenting home, family, marriage, and romance as the topics of major concern to women ("Having It All?," 218). This is echoed in another article by Reep and Dambrot, "Television's professional women." This study points out the trend in

the mid-80s of the portrayal of single professional women. A significant point made in this article is about the involvement between the male and female leads – “to indulge in a love affair would dramatically alter the working relationship.” (“Television’s professional women,” 381) This observation, as it applies to Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark, reveals a tendency in television to protect the female but maintain the romantic tension, as the teasing and anticipation of an affair draws more ratings than the actual indulgence or culmination of mutual attraction. For Amanda and Lois, affairs with their respective partners would be dangerous: Agency policy would demand that Lee and Amanda be assigned separate partners and Lois would become a target of numerous villains if she knew the men she loves (Clark and Superman) are actually one person. The ability of both couples to form personal and professional relationships lends credence to the argument that the females in these relationships do prove themselves to be strong enough to accept the danger, despite their male partners’ overprotectiveness.

Reep and Dambrot also conducted two experiments on viewer interpretation of those professional women – “Television Sex Roles in the 1980s” (with Daniel Bell) and “In the eye of the beholder”. Both experiments found that “if women are portrayed in nontraditional roles and situations, viewers will not ascribe traditional stereotypical feminine traits to them” (“In the eye of the beholder,” 67). Based on this study, there is indeed an audience for female



characters placed in non-traditional feminine situations and given traditional feminine traits.

Counterbalancing the optimism of Reep and Dambrot is Sally Steenland's study, "Women and Television in the Eighties". According to Steenland, "it seemed as if the 1980s would be *the* decade of achievement for women in media, a fruition of the progress and promise of the 1970s." ("Women and Television in the Eighties," 53) What she found was that the number of female leads by the late 1980s was very low, females in a working class setting had disappeared or were portrayed inaccurately, and the existing professional female characters "balanced their multiple roles with ease." ("Women and Television in the Eighties," 55) Because of what Steenland alleges to be a lack of female leads, those leads that did and do exist on television are important as they can become the benchmark for social attitudes and behaviors.

The problem with female leads appears to be what Myra Macdonald calls the "enigma" of femininity in *Representing Women*. In chapter four, "Enigma variations," she discusses the displacement of women out of their "natural habitat." This displacement occurs when a female is "extrapolated from her familial context, or at the very least inhabits that space restlessly and uneasily." (*Representing Women*, 105) From this definition, both Amanda and Lois are "displaced" for the purpose of creating a female enigma that appeals to male fantasies. The fantasy tends to involve making the traditional female space more habitable or convincing the female that she belongs in that traditional role.

Amanda becomes a spy, and men can fantasize about protecting her from dangerous situations; while Lois is a driven career woman who men want to seduce into being their sex toy. Macdonald argues that the pattern is changing - the enigma is now directed at women who are forced to ask themselves "what do we want?" Instead of these female images catering to men's desires, they have become a "catalogue" of what women can become (*Representing Women*, 112).

*Boxed In*, a collection of essays by women who study feminism in television and women who work in the industry, examines this refocusing on and of the female image. According to these essays, the women's movement should understand the extent to which public consciousness of both men and women is shaped by images in the media, an understanding which can be followed by an assault on the cultural stereotyping of women and their experiences. This cultural stereotype takes the form of the "new woman" who is healthy, well-dressed with gorgeous hair and makeup, works and keeps a well-run household, putting unbearable pressure on real women with little time to work and keep house, much less maintain a beautiful appearance themselves. Another issue addressed in some of the essays is that although there are programs directed at a female audience, there are still difficulties in addressing feminist issues because of the various meanings attached not only to feminist issues but to traditional female roles and qualities. For fictional television, fantasy sometimes

compounds this difficulty because its framing of dramas or comedies can obscure the truths and issues that need to be addressed.

In Julia Lesage's "The Hegemonic Female Fantasy," the fantasy is defined as mass consumed texts, such as television programs, that feed into and create daydreams that are socially acceptable, much like the often-derided romance novel. Lesage argues further that programs that could be considered resistant to the dominant ideology can be manipulated to keep them socially acceptable. She does allow for the polysemic nature of texts, especially television texts, but contends that the fantasy is so culturally and socially ingrained that it is nearly impossible to resist. This is more applicable to Lois and Clark than to Scarecrow and Mrs. King, as Lois and Clark was touted as an updated version of the Superman legend, yet Lois still often relies on Superman and even Clark for help.

Recently, scholars have argued that traditional women's genres should not be repudiated. Instead, these texts should be analyzed for their pleasure effects and polysemic texts that may offer resistant readings to the dominant ideology. In "Television: Aesthetics and Audiences," Charlotte Brunsdon reasons that an understanding of what television texts exist and how they are received by audiences, or what makes them popular, can assist in the development of new "kinds" of texts. Brunsdon even asserts that focusing on differences between "high" television and "low" television are pointless, as what is known as "low" television is what is viewed by most of the people most of the

time. It is these images that the public is presented with repeatedly, whether they are critically acclaimed or considered mindless entertainment.

Those shows that offer realism usually appeal to the masses, critics, and the academics. Cagney & Lacey has been analyzed many times by feminists, and has become the standard by which all other shows featuring female leads has been measured.<sup>2</sup> It is lauded as the most successful and realistic portrayal of female characters on television. "Watching the Detectives" and "Cagney & Lacey: Feminist Strategies of Detection" in *Television and Women's Culture* discuss the reinterpretation of the "male gaze" of the camera, reflecting feminist issues in television portrayals of strong females. The reinterpretation comes from a focus on the female experience, specifically female friendship, on its own merits, rather than defined in the traditional patriarchy. In "Critical and Textual Hypermasculinity," Lynne Joyrich furthers the idea that television, unlike film, does not possess a "male gaze;" rather characteristics such as intimacy, fragmentation (through commercials within episodes and the nature of serialization), and irrationality are "drawn from stereotypes of femininity" ("Critical and Textual Hypermasculinity," 158). The difference between the "male gaze" of film and the "glance" of television is that the "glance" is a "domestic, distracted, and powerless look that implies continuous co-presence -- a 'feminine' look that is too close to the object to maintain the gap essential to desire and full subjectivity." ("Critical and Textual Hypermasculinity," 159) It is

---

<sup>2</sup> According to John Fiske in Television Culture, Bonnie Dow in Prime Time Feminism, and Lorraine Gammon in "The Enigma of the Female Gaze," to name a few.

this lack of power that leads back to the earlier mention of the polysemic nature of television texts and the function of the viewer to form his or her own conclusions from a program. Some feminists feel that practically all television programming is dominated by patriarchal ideology, but others, such as Andrea Press and Bonnie Dow, have enough faith in the viewer to argue that even though a program may appear to uphold the status quo, there can be alternate messages taken from the same text that support resistant philosophies.

"Reading Feminine Discourse" looks at one of the primary dominant ideologies, the family unit. Jackie Byars states that television becomes part of the family unit through its role of preserving the ideology of that unit, by the predominance of the "male gaze." While Byars supports the argument of a dominant and overpowering ideology, she also admits the existence of resistant readings of television text. Although the polysemy is considered much the same as a stereotype of inconsistent irrational female logic, it is this very ability of a housewife to shift attention between numerous and varied duties that can translate into the juggling and consideration of different interpretations of a program by just one person. By this argument, a single viewer can derive multiple meanings from just one episode of a program. But the cultural and social values of that individual determine which meaning becomes the most valued and accepted. This is where the true problem lies, in the encoded gender roles that have existed for centuries.

**"Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-scepticism" goes even further with the encoding of gender roles. Susan Bordo critiques how the feminist criticism has been directed at the role of gender in the creation of ideology and theory and argues that gender itself is so encoded that even a feminist interpretation is not as objective as it should be. This deconstruction of feminist theory addresses the generalizations made within the theory and are, according to Bordo, a reflection of the post-feminist movement. Post-feminism thrives on these kinds of observations, but Bordo does suggest that an understanding that gender *is* encoded can help in the creation of an ideology that circumvents the already existing social and cultural values. This is why television programs publicized as "feminist" often fail to meet expectations – traditional patriarchal values still frame the show. Based on Bordo's comments, until the "new ideology" is developed, television programs can only offer resistant readings in the framework of dominant values.**

**Todd Gitlin in "Prime Time Ideology" and Paul Hirsch and Horace Newcomb in "Television as a Cultural Forum" looked at cultural bases for the analysis of television. They concluded that the cultural role of entertainment and the subsequent formation of "public thought" or ideology was the most apparent basis for this type of analysis. Hirsch and Newcomb also support the theory of television text's polysemic nature, saying that television is a complex medium and that for every program that is studied and its symbols and meanings defined there are another set of undiscovered symbols and meanings. ("Television as a**

Cultural Forum," 53) Gitlin offers the interesting argument that "the hegemonic system itself amplifies legitimated forms of opposition." ("Prime Time Ideology," 263) He cites the economics of broadcasting — television programs are considered bait for a large audience (hence consumer group) by advertisers; therefore, the advertisers are often willing to buy into programming that chips away at the status quo but will reach a massive amount of viewers. The danger in this, though, is that the oppositional form of ideology becomes domesticated and incorporated into the dominant ideology. Gitlin maintains that the dominant ideology survives because it is fluid enough to incorporate *slightly* differing viewpoints.

Thousands of studies have been done to determine the effects of television viewing, most of them borne out of the belief that "[O]ur shame about television twists into superstitious fear." (*Television: the Medium...*, 3) The fear is that television has a negative impact on society by promoting violence, stereotypes, and many other cultural ills. In television's infancy, Marshall McLuhan designated it as a "hot" medium, meaning that it promotes little or no interaction with its consumer. This lack of interaction, it is feared by parents and sociologists alike, will produce generations of "couch potatoes" with no original thoughts or, even worse, warped thoughts. With the increase in the study of television, this theory is thrown into doubt by writers such as Fiske, who believe that "viewers and television interact." (*Television Culture*, 19) Based on Fiske's statement, it could follow that television is more a reflection of society than a

determinant. While television does, to a certain extent, promote an ideology or ideologies, the viewers actively derive meanings from the programs they view. The meanings produced are usually a result of the social orientation of the viewer, whether the deduced meaning is what is actually intended by the dominant ideologists. I support this as a more accurate and realistic view of television, as I also believe that the average viewer is not the "dupe" that many scholars and even programmers ("Television as a Cultural Forum," 46 and "Television: Aesthetics and Audiences," 69) make her or him out to be.



## **Amanda and Lois: An Overview**

At first reading, Scarecrow and Mrs. King appears to be a pre-feminist text supporting patriarchal values, while Lois and Clark appears to present a strong feminist dialogue. Closer inspection reveals that they both resemble soap operas, a traditional feminine text. Each series has a strong touch of fantasy and humor; in addition, they fulfill a text's pleasure role that is specifically directed at a female audience. The pleasure role of a text is what makes it appealing to the audience, by identifying with the audience members through familiar characters and settings. The "pleasure" appears in the entertaining, and often comedic, manner of carrying out everyday tasks. This particular type of text is usually criticized by feminists for its advocacy of male-dominant ideology, but recently has become considered valuable because of its predominantly female audiences. The "pleasure" of the text has been reinterpreted to mean how seemingly weak characters resolve situations, instead of how entertainingly the situations are complicated by these weak characters.

Both Amanda King and Lois Lane seem to be "resistant" characters, throwing off the traditional female images. They offer opportunities for a female viewer to live out fantasies of getting out of the humdrum life of housework to solve crimes with a handsome, if not especially intelligent, male partner. As Ang found in her study of melodramatic television, female viewers can "try on" the attitudes and personalities of different characters without any real consequence to their own lives. ("Melodramatic Identifications," 83) But this role-playing does

sometimes allow them to make observations and conclusions about real-life situations that might not otherwise have been considered. These actions could be anything from a different point of view being offered about a similar situation to a brand-new way of looking at a chronic problem.

While the element of fantasy is a large part of the appeal to female viewers, there still has to be a certain amount of identification with a lead character in order for the fantasy to be engaged. Both Amanda and Lois have traits with which female viewers can identify. Both women enter traditionally male careers, espionage and journalism, and encounter resistance from both males and females within those fields. Conflicts with other females in their workplaces are more destructive because of the needed solidarity against male hierarchy. Seeing these conflicts on television validates the need to resolve them, although a real-life resolution takes more effort and time than a scripted resolution. The personal relationships of Amanda and Lois also appeal to female viewers. Amanda's healthy relationship with her mother and Lois' lack of a relationship with her mother reflect the common experiences, both good and bad, of mother-daughter relationships. Just as the relationships of real people shape who they are and who they become, the relationships of Amanda and Lois reflect their development. The presentation of Amanda's and Lois' relationships are part of their characterization and helps define who they are at the beginning of the series and who they become at the end.

Over the course of both series, each character develops according to how she learns to balance her personal life and career. Being fictional characters, neither Amanda nor Lois portray an accurate depiction of real-life women struggling with this balance; however, they do address several pertinent issues such as child care, housekeeping, and the maintenance of a social life. At the beginning of these two series, two women find their personal lives and career lives are beginning to collide: for Amanda, the homelife is established and needs to be adjusted to accommodate her new career and for Lois, the opposite is true: she has an established career but is feeling a need for a personal life. Clearly, Amanda presents the stronger development, as she establishes a non-traditional career while keeping homelife intact (albeit with the help of her mother), while Lois' personal life does not truly reach outside of her work since she marries her journalist partner.

Achieving a balance between career and personal life is not the only goal for Amanda and Lois; each female also undergoes a personality change over the course of each series. Their personality change is a clear reflection of their evolving lives. Amanda becomes more independent and confident as her skills as an agent grow, while Lois becomes less career-oriented and ambitious as she and Clark become more romantically involved. As both women develop new kinds of relationships, their definitions of themselves change as well. Amanda becomes a friend then a lover to Lee, works her way past Francine's intimidation, and gains the respect of the Agency supervisors. These positive

relationships indicate the growth of confidence and independence in Amanda. Lois' relationships indicate the opposite: she becomes emotionally dependent on Clark, makes Perry a surrogate father, and fails to create a healthy relationship with her mother. In each of these relationships, Lois surrenders the power position to the other person.

Early in both series, an episode deals with a complete character alteration of the female lead. While these character reversals are extreme, they foreshadow what the characters of Amanda and Lois develop into by the third and fourth seasons of each series. In "DOA," Amanda accidentally ingests a mind-altering drug meant for Lee; and in "Pheromone, My Lovely," Lois (among others at the Daily Planet) succumbs to a pheromone sprayed by a vengeful chemist that overpowers human inhibitions. Amanda becomes masculine, efficient, and very business-like, acting like a crack agent. She even acts like a father figure distracted by the duties of his job and not communicating with Dottie and the boys, putting off quality time until her job is finished. Lois, on the other hand, becomes ultra-feminine, wearing her hair curled and dressing in frilly, fussy clothing and draping herself all over Clark. Of course, each is mortified to discover how they acted under the influence of the drug or chemical, which brings up the question of whether the actions were to be interpreted as delusions or subconscious desires. Either way, Amanda's and Lois' discomfort shows a negativity toward these desires. The desire to step out of the designated role indicates delusional or irrational thought. In the end, these

subconscious and valid desires embarrass Amanda and Lois because they are not "proper" in their current chosen environment. A comparison of the characterization of Amanda and Lois in these episodes to the characterization of them in the last season of their shows indicates again Amanda's progression and Lois' regression. Amanda gains respect at work without becoming masculinized; Lois becomes a weak female clinging to Clark.

These episodes reveal that most gender roles on television are artificial. Female roles are constructed according to male ideology (Representing Women, 105). The artificiality of the characters often makes it difficult to address complex issues, since only one viewpoint appears instead of the varying shades of opinion present in most individuals. Television characters are often stereotypical to ease the time constraints and story resolutions of scripts. Amanda and Lois initially represent stereotypes of the helpless housewife and the over-driven career woman, respectively. Instead of offering new characterizations of Amanda and Lois, the inversion shows them in different stereotypes. Amanda is androgynized, since a feminine figure cannot perform the masculine espionage duties that she attempts. Lois' innocence and budding sexuality place her as a man's toy to be played with and not respected. In real life, most women possess some of these characteristics some of the time, but not one of them all the time. But these two particular episodes can teach women how to react in similar situations, especially since the consequences of the female character's development occur more quickly than in real life.

From a feminist standpoint, it seems that Amanda develops more positively than Lois during the course of their respective series. While Amanda becomes more independent and assertive, and creates her own space within the espionage field ("Photo Finish"), Lois seems to become more traditionally "feminized" and less concerned with career goals. In "It's a Small World After All," she tells Clark she had vowed in high school to not marry until after her first Pulitzer. He asks her, "What happened?" and she replies, "I met you." Lois trades her career ambitions to be with the "man of her dreams," subjugating her own desires to constructed romantic fantasies. Rather than being known as a famous reporter, she chooses a life of tradition based on male-dominated ideology.

Lois' inability to create lasting platonic relationships creates a need for companionship that overwhelms her at the first sign of Superman, a truly fantastical figure. At the beginning of Lois and Clark, she places herself in the position of a spectator or investigator separate from events around her – a quite lonely position, not experiencing events for herself. She is reluctant to write stories that are not compelling and controversial, disdaining such stories as fruit fly spraying as "exhilarating subject matter." ("Pheromone My Lovely") Lois needs the complication of involved conspiracies and plots to take her mind off her own empty personal life. However, the involvement of Superman in these stories intensifies the emptiness and frustration, making her more susceptible to accepting any long-term relationship.

In contrast to the reviews in *TV Guide*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and other trade magazines that describe the updated Lois Lane as “fearless” and “domineering,” Amanda King, the housewife-turned-agent, is described as “perky” in many of these same publications. While Amanda does show some awe at the world of espionage that Lee Stetson introduces her to, she is a more complex character than “perky” or “wide-eyed.” As a divorcée and mother of two, her priorities are providing for her family; her ex-husband is often out of the country, working as a construction engineer for overseas companies. Amanda never complains that Joe is behind in or stingy with alimony payments and child support, but the implication exists that she needs more money to get by. As someone active in various social causes, Amanda probably would not see a secretarial or clerical job as fulfilling. She is a doer, not a dreamer, as seen in several episodes where she jumps headfirst into potentially dangerous situations that require action on somebody’s part. This is a tendency shared by Lois, although each character’s motives may be slightly different. Both have no concern for their own safety in responding to dangerous people or situations, but Amanda’s motivation is to help someone in trouble while Lois’ motivation is to get a scoop. But that is where any similarities end, as Lois Lane is a single, career woman with no intention of being tied down to home and hearth until she receives that first Pulitzer. She is gutsy and strong and has worked hard to gain the respect of her colleagues, while Amanda is just beginning her career.

Neither Amanda nor Lois have to deal with a significant clash of marriage and career, as they both marry their working partners. They are fantasy women, allowing real-life female viewers to step out of their own worlds for an hour or two. But even in the "ideal" worlds of Amanda and Lois, incidents of personal and career life interfere with each other. Amanda schedules work around her boys' soccer matches until her workload is too heavy, then she feels guilty. Although her mother, Dottie, conveniently takes over the housewife and mother role, working women still relate easily to Amanda's discomfort at having to rely on others to help keep the household intact. Lois' job often interferes with personal plans, specifically her first date with Clark. Unexpected deadlines are also common in the real working world, whether the woman works as a journalist, a banker or a cake decorator. Amanda also has to incorporate her new part-time employment into her routine; the fact that espionage is not a nine-to-five job makes her task that much more difficult and infringes even more on time spent with her children and mother. This is the kind of situation addressed by Reep and Dambrot who maintain that, although the portrayal of women's careers in primetime television has improved, most programs "continue to say that marriage, career and motherhood conflict." ("Television's Professional Women," 381) Lois herself briefly experiences this conflict when she and Clark attempt to adopt a child. Unfortunately, the series ended before this issue could be fully explored.



While women work as hard as (and sometimes harder than) men, problems still arise in the workplace. Lois is still subject to such sexist comments as "I'll make you a deal, Miss Lane, you show me your source and I'll show you mine" ("The Source"); "Gimme the box, I'll give you the babe" and "If you don't mind my saying so, I think you have great legs" (by kidnappers in "The Prankster"). Although Lois has an established reputation as a credible reporter, she has to deal with obvious chauvinism. This is generally on the part of villains, possibly in keeping with their negative characterization. An obvious sexist attitude toward Lois is Tempus' ironic disposal of her "in 1866 without the right to vote, own property, or write for a great metropolitan newspaper." ("Tempus Fugitive"). However, any *overt* male chauvinism or sexism from male co-workers is absent; instead a kind of reverse sexism exists on the part of Cat Grant, the society columnist, who observes that Lois is dull and has no personal life. While Cat has men's interest and a social life, she knows that she is not as intelligent as Lois and will never gain even the appearance of respect that men have toward Lois.

The male chauvinism directed toward Amanda is more subtle. Most of it occurs in the first couple of seasons in Lee's and Francine's attitudes about Amanda's lack of agenting skills or intelligence. In later episodes, the sexism is seen in the villains' attitudes – they don't see Amanda as a threat so she is often left untied or unconscious or is not checked for weapons. She often becomes a "secret weapon" for Lee, because of the villains not expecting her actions or

participation. By the third season, Amanda is handling guns, usually a symbol of male dominance, signifying an equal footing with Lee. Amanda has also become confident enough in her role as an agent to make independent decisions and act upon them. She takes all of the "protective and constructive" advice that Lee has given her over the previous two years and turns it around to put him in some sticky situations from which she is more than able to help him out. For example, while searching for a rogue agent, Lee walks into the middle of a domestic squabble, and as he looks to Amanda for help, she tells him "You're right, Lee, I should wait by the car" ("Utopia Now"); 'waiting by the car' being Lee's order to Amanda many times in dangerous situations. This time, she leaves him to deal with an unfamiliar situation that she could easily solve. At this point, she is sure of her own career at the Agency based on her own merits, separate from Lee's. In contrast to her earlier attitude, Amanda also becomes less concerned with spending time with her sons. In later episodes, the main concern she exhibits for them and her mother is their safety from attacks by counter-agents. Conveniently, her live-in mother becomes a surrogate mother and housewife figure, allowing Amanda to fulfill the demands of her career. Because Amanda does not have to worry about laundry or feeding her sons, she can direct more attention and energy to proving her value in a man's world.

Significantly, the obvious sexism that occurs in the workplace comes primarily from other females within both Amanda's and Lois' workplaces. Cat's exit in the second season of Lois and Clark neutralizes this negative input,

leaving Lois to suffer the half-witted remarks of the villains that are often so obvious and ludicrous that they mock themselves by even being uttered. The blatant sexism from the villains distracts the viewer from the subtle, but more harmful, sexism from Lois' colleagues. Amanda's increasing experience out in the field effectively counteracts Francine's verbal jibes. Francine herself becomes a less active character and soon is seen more in a secretarial role. In fact, Amanda becomes a more effective agent than Francine because of her seeming mediocrity.

Lois' development is very different from Amanda's – she appears to regress from feminist values to postfeminist values and, at times, even pre-feminist values. In the first season, she is very impatient with career obstructions, from a last-minute cancellation by a business date to a perfume photo shoot taking over the Planet. She covers personal disdain and feelings of inferiority with political correctness or feminism: "The beautiful people...it's a sad commentary on society. Dress a certain way, smell a certain way and people will love you" ("Pheromone, My Lovely"). This is an unusual view for a successful, attractive female who herself takes great pains in dressing and appearing a certain way.

For a reporter, Lois tends to have a narrow view of the world. In "Green, Green Glow of Home," Lois reluctantly visits Smallville to investigate government research on a plot of farmland. Clark tries to convince Lois of the significance of even small town communities: "Take away middle America, what do you have?"

to which Lois sardonically replies, "Art, music, theatre." She feels comfortable only in the fast-paced cosmopolitan settings and smirks at the laid-back generosity of Smallville. This is a far cry from the Lois Lane who later so eloquently appeals to the sympathies of the New Kryptonians: "Without kindness, what is your home worth? Without love, what are your lives worth?" ("Big Girls Don't Fly") Instead of tangible facts and figures, Lois places value in things she can't see, emotion and sensitivity. The pragmatic masculine attitude she possessed at the beginning gives way to the emotional feminine stereotype.

Development of Lois' character is erratic because of the complexities of the Superman myth itself. Only in fantasy could a top investigative reporter not realize that her partner and a superhero are the same person, being completely duped by a simple pair of glasses. One of the better villains of the series poses The Question of the Series: "How dumb was she?" ("Tempus Fugitive"), in reference to her blindness to Clark's alter ego. But this fantasy also plays into a development of the love triangle that contributes to Lois' devolution as a strong female figure.

The writers chose not to develop Lois from the hard-nosed, almost cartoonish career woman into a woman able to balance a personal life and a career. Instead, she becomes neurotic about the ways her career affects her personal life, from an escaped mental patient bent on ruining her and Clark's wedding ("Swear to God, This Time...") to her unsuitability as an adoptive parent because of her inclination for getting into danger ("The Family Hour"). She rants

while Clark, and often Perry and Jimmy, listen then try to reason with her and assure her that everything will work out. These three men often create a surrogate family for Lois, much like Amanda's mother and two sons; they serve as a cheering squad, supporting the female lead in her endeavors. Having positive male figures in a female character's life is appealing to a feminine audience because of the female fantasy of men supporting women in independent, non-traditional pursuits ("Hegemonic Female Fantasy," 84). Many real-life women do not experience this, but knowing it exists in some form gives them hope that they can experience it.

Amanda and Lois both offer positive role models in the beginning of their series. Amanda is a housewife, looking to start a career and life outside her home; Lois is a respected, well-known investigative journalist. However, Lois' potential is stifled by male ideology, the very action expected to occur to a housewife making her first foray into a "man's world." Instead, Amanda becomes the strong, independent woman while Lois becomes the passive female. Female development in these two shows is quite different, but is based on common themes: relationships and the importance of feminine knowledge and experience.

Relationships play an important role in the development of both Amanda and Lois. The most prominent relationship is that of the female lead to the male lead, but other relationships define the female character as well. One of the most significant is the relationship of Amanda and Lois to other female

characters in their respective series, most notably the mother-daughter relationship. As Carol Gilligan says in "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," the values passed down from mother to daughter affect the daughter's relationship not only to other females, but also to males ( "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," 63). Since Amanda apparently has a closer relationship with her mother than Lois does, there will be significant differences in the way each character reacts with those people around her. That is what the following sections will address.

## **Female-Female Relationships**

### **Female Friends/Co-workers/Acquaintances**

Female companionship is the forum in which feminine issues are most thoroughly expressed, according to Jo Freeman.<sup>1</sup> The interaction between females in a series, conversations, shared incidents, etc., can present varying attitudes towards feminine issues. When only one character addresses these issues, a depth of meaning and significance is missing. Because neither Amanda nor Lois have close female friends, very little female bonding occurs on these two shows, except for some mother-daughter bonding that will be addressed later. This absence of female characters prevents a dialogue against the patriarchal *status quo*. However, Amanda and Lois react differently to this situation; Amanda combines the qualities of two female stereotypes – housewife and career woman – to achieve her goals, while Lois regresses from a career woman stereotype to a postfeminist stereotype. Through Amanda's progression, Scarecrow and Mrs. King presents a positive image of female companionship and the sharing of feminine experience and knowledge. Lois' devolution and lack of positive female companionship shows that Lois and Clark supports the male-dominated hegemony by avoiding female solidarity altogether.

The isolation of female characters within a show often results in varying portrayals, and thus definitions, of feminine issues. Female characters

---

<sup>1</sup> As referenced in Bonnie Dow's *Prime Time Feminism*. Freeman, in *The Politics of Women's Liberation*, discusses "public sharing" that creates a realization of what was thought to be individual problems and opinions are in fact common and societal.

traditionally represent a single stereotype, substantiating that stereotype and failing to offer resolution for its inadequacies ("Fictions and Ideologies," 172-175). For example, the only other female featured in Amanda's workplace is Francine, a full-time agent who makes no attempt to hide her contempt for Amanda and takes every opportunity available to make Amanda look foolish. In "Saved by the Bells," Francine shows up at Amanda's house looking for Lee and proceeds to create tension between Amanda and her mother, Dottie. Amanda and Francine represent the polar opposites of what females can achieve: Amanda is the mother and homemaker while Francine is the dedicated career woman. Based on these portrayals at the beginning of the series, one woman cannot possess qualities seen in both characters.

Reinforcing the postfeminist argument that career women have to sacrifice their homelife to pursue their career, Francine is secretly envious of Amanda and seeks to create confusion in her home. The invasion of the home — the last "sacred" area of the female — by an antagonistic female can be seen as the worst form of attack, an attack by someone who knows the innate weaknesses and exactly how to play on them. Instead of forming a female solidarity with Amanda against male dominance, Francine chooses to cause confusion in Amanda's home. The confusion is to divert Amanda's attention away from her career pursuits and back to domestic interests. In other words, Francine attempts to keep Amanda in a subordinate feminine position. This



invasion identifies Francine as a negative female character and Amanda as a positive female character.

As the series progresses, Francine's character appears less and less as Amanda develops into the successful career woman. Amanda achieves a balance between her homelife and her career, blending her original qualities with those of the career female. Francine, as the total career woman, becomes marginalized in favor of the new, improved woman represented by Amanda. Female stereotypes are pushed out of the way in Scarecrow and Mrs. King for a more complex figure. This show suggests that career alone cannot define a woman any more than home and family life alone can; some semblance of a personal life is necessary.

Lois is even more isolated than Amanda. She is neither on friendly terms with her female co-workers nor does she develop positive relationships with women she encounters in her work routine. The only other recurring female character at the Daily Planet is Catherine "Cat" Grant, the society columnist. Cat is the antithesis of Lois. Cat is only interested in men, her looks, and making the right social connections. What is ironic about Lois' attitude is that the element of Cat that she holds most in contempt, the use of feminine wiles, is the very method Lois uses in order to get an exclusive interview with Lex Luthor. She shows up at Lex's ball dressed in a striking low-cut gown, poses and waits for a clap of thunder to accompany her demand of "Lex Luthor, why haven't you returned my phone calls?" ("Pilot") Lois often wears low-cut and seductive suits

when going after a difficult interview, blaming male weakness for her attire. Instead of using her intelligence and skills, she reverts to negative feminine methods of obtaining information. After the first season, however, Cat is gone (without explanation) and there is no recurring female character with which to compare Lois. An additional female figure subjected to male ideology is unnecessary because of Lois' characterization already fulfills that stereotype. Redundant portrayals of a stereotype, as discussed earlier, may dilute the impact of that stereotype; hence, the absence of a replacement for the character of Cat. Lois acquires more of Cat's traits as the series progresses, but in a more subservient manner. While Cat concerns herself with outward appearances, her first priority is for her needs and goals; Lois, in contrast, concerns herself with Clark and his needs.

Since Lois is initially more career-oriented than Amanda, she feels more competitive pressure from other women. As a woman, she is already attacked by traditional male ideology; in addition, most female figures who appear on the show tend to be villains, obviously portraying negative female stereotypes. Their attacks on Lois and her environment are representative of attacks on Lois' autonomy as a woman. The number and severity of the attacks reflect Lois' involvement with Clark. The more Lois conforms to the subjective portrayal of the feminine, the "safer" her life becomes from female-based attacks. These attacks function Lois into Clark's arms for protection and force her into a submissive female role.

**"The Rival" focuses on competitive feminine pressure. An old classmate of Lois shows up in town and begins scooping her and showing interest in Clark. The antagonism, we learn, stems from the classmate, Linda, stealing a boyfriend and a story of Lois' while they were in college. This is similar to Francine's invasion of Amanda's home in that it is an attack on Lois' career and the part of her life that defines her. Linda is the stereotypical underhanded sneaky female who cannot think for herself and steals ideas from other women. Lois acts just as negatively, as she reacts very emotionally to Linda's presence in Metropolis. This episode promotes solidarity between females by demonstrating the consequences of not working together. In their failed attempts at one-upmanship, both females appear inept and incapable of competing against men. Because Lois and Linda are busy trying to scoop each other, Clark discovers the competing editor's plan and sets out (as Superman) to stop it. Meanwhile, Lois and Linda, refusing to leave the crime scene and miss a scoop, wind up being kidnapped. Both are punished by a patriarchal figure for being over-ambitious, and then they are rescued by another male figure. This shows the necessity for solidarity between females, as without it they are powerless to control their individual destinies. Acting as a team, Lois or Linda could have contacted the police and had the editor arrested; but since neither refused to let the other have an advantage, they both suffered. This episode shows the importance of female solidarity; when females are so concerned with their conflict they are oblivious to the male dominance occurring to them.**

Just as the isolation of female characters leads to conflict, female companionship shows the shared concerns of women and nullifies the stereotypical portrayals. But even on the one occasion when Amanda and Francine appear to be bonding, the common connection is involvement with Lee, a male interest. Here, Francine takes the role of the gossipy housewife who wants to know all the details while Amanda offers little information, maintaining the cool demeanor of a career woman disinterested in personal lives. These characterizations are reinforcements of stereotypes. However, Amanda does interact with other women for a collective good, still maintaining her feminine qualities. In several episodes, she appeals to the women involved in the specific cases to help her find the solution. The appeals are usually based on protection of society or protection of the home unit, but female solidarity forms to defeat a villain, typically male. Another significant point in this solidarity is that it is more effective than the traditional male-based forms of solving cases – using force or weapons. Again, Scarecrow and Mrs. King offers a more empowering female image than does Lois and Clark. Female experience and knowledge solve the cases in Scarecrow and Mrs. King, while in Lois and Clark, male superpowers save the world and leave no room for female action.

Another effect of the lack of female solidarity is that the antagonism between each female and other major female characters creates a bond between the female and male leads. In Scarecrow and Mrs. King, Lee takes Amanda's side when Francine attacks her; and in Lois and Clark, the arrival of

Linda King makes Lois realize her feelings for Clark. Neither situations are especially empowering, but they do lead to the romance between the leads. It is the romance that curbs Lois' ambition for a Pulitzer and involves Amanda more fully in her career. This indicates the larger issues of female solidarity. Since Lois can't relate very well to other women, especially those in direct career competition, she takes shelter in romantic ideology by placing more importance on her relationship with Clark than on her career. Amanda, on the other hand, looks for solidarity with the women she encounters on her cases. Amanda finds strength in female relationships because they often help her solve cases, while Lois finds conflict in female relationships because she competes with everyone around her. Feminine experience becomes a tool *for* Amanda in Scarecrow and Mrs. King and a weapon *against* Lois in Lois and Clark. This contrast will be addressed further in "Professional Relationships."

## Mothers

The quality of the mother-daughter relationships is important in the development of Amanda and Lois because the mother-daughter relationship teaches women how to relate to other women. Since Lois and her mother do not get along, she misses out on the advantages and lessons of female nurturing. In contrast, Amanda and Dottie have a relationship that goes beyond the typical mother-daughter bond, enabling Amanda to create productive relationships with other women. The advances for women created by feminism have given Amanda and Lois an advantage over their mothers, often creating an inverted

mother-daughter relationship. For Amanda, this places her even more in a position of authority in her home; while for Lois, it creates unreasonable expectations of her mother that go unfulfilled. These situations frame the characterization of Amanda and Lois. Amanda focuses more on her career because her mother takes over the domestic duties. Lois transfers her expectations of her mother for a traditional home life onto the life she plans with Clark.

The amount of respect that Amanda and Lois have for their mothers is evident in the reasoning behind keeping the "Secret." Amanda does not tell Dottie that she is a secret agent to protect her family from counter agents; Lois does not tell Ellen that Clark is Superman because she considers her mother a neurotic blabbermouth. By withholding this information, Lois taints not only future female relationships, but also relationships with men. She has no point of reference from which to create and maintain equally balanced relationships. In contrast, Amanda realizes the strides that women have made through feminism because of her relationship with Dottie. Unlike Lois, Amanda knows what to expect *and* demand from relationships, both female and male.

Scarecrow and Mrs. King suggests that female experience passes from generation to generation, and comes as well from natural instinct. This experience and knowledge are important in forming relationships, not just with other females but with males. Lois' deficiency translates into failure in all her personal relationships; not just failure in forming them but failure in maintaining a

balance of power in them. Lois' inadequacies indicate the importance of feminine experience and knowledge from a perspective opposite that of Amanda's. Amanda shows the usefulness of feminine experience and knowledge in both traditionally feminine *and* masculine realms, while Lois shows the confusion and powerlessness that occurs without them.

The scene in "I Am Not Now...A Spy" between Dottie and Dean's mother (Dean being Amanda's "boyfriend" at the beginning of the series) represents of the generation gap between pre-feminist and feminist women. The two older women discuss Amanda's future as if they and Dean know best what should be done, rather than letting Amanda decide for herself. Of course, Amanda is blissfully ignorant of the conversation and proceeds with the career and lifestyle that she chooses. Dean has all the qualities that Dottie considers important in a husband. She even goes out of her way to invite his mother for a luncheon, in hopes of creating a familial bond and improving Amanda and Dean's relationship. While the two mothers are eating watercress sandwiches, Amanda is meeting Lee at a hot dog stand — a metaphoric representation of the two lives from which Amanda has to choose. One is a stable, conventional married life and the other is the exciting and impromptu life of an agent. The two mothers also discuss Amanda's "business" and the amount of Amanda's time it might consume. Dean's mother apparently feels that this time should be spent with Dean, fulfilling traditional female duties.

Although Amanda and Dottie do not agree on every issue, Dottie recognizes the feminist advances made since she herself was a young woman. She also knows that Amanda has more available lifestyle options. Despite her misgivings about Amanda ending the relationship with Dean, Dottie encourages Amanda's desire to have a career. Amanda has the same nurturing instincts as Dottie and the same concern for a stable homelife; however, Amanda's more "liberated" female spirit enables her to take the adventurous energy that she inherited from Dottie and decide on an unconventional occupation. She has the opportunity and the means to become something other than a homemaker. Dottie willingly takes over the role of "housewife" to enable Amanda to pursue her goals. Because Amanda escapes from domestic restraints, she is in a position of power to redefine herself in terms of her career. The relegation of domestic chores to another female is an authoritative move and shows the increasing authority and emancipation of Amanda. Also significant in this situation is the female network of support she has in pursuing non-traditional roles; a show of female solidarity encourages female entrance into male areas.

The mother-daughter relationship does not follow such a positive path in Lois and Clark. While Dottie plays a prominent role in Amanda's life, Ellen (Lois' mother) does not appear until the end of the third season of Lois and Clark. Initially, Lois does not have a mother figure with whom to discuss relationships, careers, or life goals. The only mother figure that Lois has in her life is Martha, Clark's mother. Martha by no means represents a conventional mother figure,



as she is one of the rare older women who has embraced feminist values. When Lois learns that Clark is Superman, Martha tells her, "Almost 30 years, and you're the first woman I've been able to talk to about my boy," creating a special bond based on this shared knowledge. Despite the age gap and the differences in cultural and educational background, Lois and Martha are equals. Ironically, the bridge that covers their differences is their mutual affection for Clark. Their connection is not made on female issues; their shared concern is for the well-being of a male figure. The inability of two female characters to connect on female issues reveals the inadequacy of Lois and Clark as a feminist text. Basing a female-female relationship on the common interest in a male does not address any female issues, only the nurturing and protection of the male ideology.

Unlike Amanda and Dottie, whose similarities create domestic harmony, Lois and Ellen's similarities create tension.<sup>2</sup> Dottie is willing to invert the mother-daughter relationship on occasion; however, Ellen still wants to maintain control over her adult daughter. Both Lois and Ellen each think they know what is best for the other, yet neither is willing to yield control in the relationship. Ellen accuses Lois of being closer to Martha, as it is obvious that they have a better relationship. What Ellen doesn't realize is that Lois and Martha's relationship is not a power struggle, instead it is a team effort to ensure Clark's

---

<sup>2</sup> The casting of Amanda's and Lois' mothers is interesting, as both roles were played by Beverly Garland. She does a wonderful job, as she is able to convincingly play a character that shaped the mind and attitude of the female lead in each series, despite the fact that each lead represented a facet of femininity quite differently.

happiness. Lois receives no “life lessons” from Martha that mothers normally pass to their daughters; Martha’s primary goal is the well-being of her son. Even when Ellen realizes that she is not competing with Martha for Lois’ affection, she still cannot connect with Lois because she herself has no positive feminine experience to share. In Ellen’s mind, a failed marriage and poor relationships with her daughters have trivialized her worth as a woman.

Because Lois expects a nurturing, mutually beneficial relationship from Ellen, she becomes disappointed. But rather than alienate Ellen more by turning to Martha, Lois tolerates her mother’s babblings and neuroses. She presents a facade of a dutiful, understanding daughter. By taking on this role, she prepares herself for her position in the traditional family unit as Clark’s wife. Lois’ “act” facilitates the transition from career woman to wife and mother, as traditionally a woman begins her life as a dutiful, obedient daughter before ever becoming a dutiful, obedient wife. Toward the end of the series, it becomes evident that the utopian family unit is being recreated, with the reconciliation of Lois’ parents and Lois and Clark’s desire to have a baby. Even though both Ellen and Lois take similar feminine roles (being paired with men in a traditional heterosexual relationship), they are still isolated from each other. No real camaraderie develops between the two, and Lois remains a truly isolated female figure. But now, instead of a strong career woman, Lois is a domesticated Superwoman. She has her man, she has her baby, she has her parents back together, and she

still has a career. But these parts of her life are in that order of importance – Clark, the baby, her family, *then* her career or her *autonomy*.

## **Female-Male Relationships**

### **Fathers and Surrogate Fathers**

While fathers appear to play a secondary role in Amanda's and Lois' lives, they do have a certain amount of influence on the two women. Just as mother-daughter relationships help shape relationships with both women and men, Amanda's and Lois' female-male relationships are proportionately based on a need for a strong male figure in their lives. Neither Amanda nor Lois have a strong father figure in their lives. Amanda's father is dead, and Lois' father is a scientist turned con artist who was rarely around during her childhood. Both females do develop relationships with surrogate fathers, although Lois has a stronger tendency to do so. As the supposedly independent career woman, Lois needs more male support than the housewife who has never been independent of a male figure until her divorce. Amanda continues to take care of herself, even when involved with Lee. On the other hand, Lois grows more and more dependent on Clark's strength.

Lois becomes a 90's version of Mary Tyler Moore by creating a surrogate family within her work environment, composed entirely of male figures. Dow states that "In Mary Tyler Moore, 'woman's place' is transformed from a matter of location to one of function." (Prime-Time Feminism, 40) Although Mary is a working woman, she still fulfills the roles of wife, mother, and daughter, in her work environment. To a certain extent, Lois also fulfills these roles. Instead of focusing on her career, Lois serves the men around her — advising Jimmy and boosting Perry's ego. But even her "womanly function" in the group is deficient,

given her lack of feminine experience and knowledge. The womanly advice Lois gives to Jimmy and Perry worsens their predicaments, and Lois' confused overtures to Clark leave him unsure of their relationship.

Lois turns to the men in her workplace primarily because she cannot develop relationships with the women there. She especially places Perry in the role of a father, going to him for advice about her career *and* her personal life. In "Barbarians at the Planet," Lois loses not only her place of employment, but also her emotional support, when the Daily Planet is destroyed by a bomb. While Lex gives her a job at Luthor News Network (LNN) and offers to share his life with her, it's not enough: "What about my life at the Planet? Clark, Perry, Jimmy – they're like family." Even with a wealthy, powerful man in love with her and a promising career in broadcast news, Lois feels out of place. Lex cannot take the place of Perry, because she considers Lex a lover, not a father figure. Only with the reinstatement of her surrogate family would she feel complete. Lois chooses her "family" over Lex since it becomes apparent that the two cannot co-exist within her life. In a way, this choice dictates the future pairing of Lois and Clark, as their union fulfills her need for a family and a lover. Lois' tendency to look to male authority figures plays a large part in her regression to pre-feminist values.

Since Amanda already has a family, she does not have to create a surrogate family within her workplace. However, she does develop a somewhat father-daughter relationship with Billy, Lee's department superior. It is Billy who

realizes the value of Amanda's experience and "domestic" skills within her Agency work. He also realizes her influence on Lee, curbing his overzealous spy tactics and playboy tendencies. While Billy acts as a mentor to Amanda and encourages her in her desire to become an agent, she doesn't really go to him for advice as Lois approaches Perry for career *and* personal advice. Because Amanda does not need a strong male figure in her life, she is able to form a relationship with Lee on individualistic terms; that is, she is not looking to replace a father or family, she wants a lover.

### Male Friends/Co-workers

Even less conspicuous than Amanda and Lois' relationships to father figures are any friendships with men. Both Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark avoid female-male friendships, except between the leads. The primary focus of each series is the budding romance between the female and male leads. Other than their male partner, neither woman seems to have any male friends. The only constant male figures in Amanda's life are Lee, Billy, and her two sons. Jimmy Olson, the cub photographer at the Planet, qualifies more as a younger brother in Lois' surrogate family. She attempts to help him find a girlfriend and defends his photojournalist ambitions to Perry. Basically, she treats Jimmy like someone who needs her "expert" guidance. The sister-brother relationship between Lois and Jimmy also prevents a non-traditional romantic involvement between an older woman and a younger man.

Relationships between unattached men and the female lead are dangerous because they have the potential to divert her attention, threatening the traditional heterosexual relationship between the female and male leads. The device of friendship, as used in these programs, provides a basis for a mutual respect between the female and male leads that leads to a well-balanced romance. Rather than the romantic relationship being based on sexual attraction, both series place significance on mutual trust and respect ("Television's Professional Women, 381). The development of the relationship is oriented to love and romance, rather than focused on male sexual gratification.

The relationships between each couple do not seem conducive to friendship at the beginning. Lee finds Amanda boring and tiresome, intrusive on his "lone wolf" style of spying. Amanda's nurturing instinct in "The First Time" annoys him as she cautions him to "don't go to singles bars" and invites him -- a relative stranger -- over for Thanksgiving dinner. Mutual respect is just as difficult for Lois and Clark to achieve. She is extremely territorial about the Daily Planet and considers Clark a threat to her career, as a journalist himself and as someone she has to "babysit" (a traditionally feminine role). In the pilot episode, she bristles with antagonism as Perry assigns her and Clark to a story. Lois wastes no time in telling him that "I did not work my buns off to become an investigative reporter for the Daily Planet to babysit some hack from

Nowheresville. One other thing – you’re not working with me, you’re working *for* me.”

Lee also considers Amanda as his personal assistant at the beginning. Like Lois does to Clark, Lee emphasizes to Amanda that they do not work together – she works for him. He soon learns to take advantage of Amanda's good nature. He coerces her into doing menial and personal chores for him, insisting that “it demonstrates your loyalty to your partner” (“Saved by the Bells”). Lee also seems to see Amanda as an asexual being, not associating the more “glamorous” female stereotypes with her. He finds it unbelievable that any man could find her “beautiful, exotic, mysterious” (“Service Above and Beyond”). This may seem empowering that he doesn’t consider her a “typical female;” but, in fact, this consideration is a negative one. In his view, Amanda is “just a housewife,” and Lee mistakenly assumes that she does not have the intelligence nor the inclination to assert her independence.

Lois also is quick in extending her possessiveness to Clark himself. When a female scientist shows interest in Clark and cooperates with him, Lois becomes instantly suspicious of her and tells Perry, “I never trusted her. The way she looked at Clark, very unprofessional” (“Pilot”). She continues this possessive streak through most of the first season, seeing Clark as her “own personal slave” (“The Rival”). But when her former classmate shows up in “The Rival,” Lois begins to see Clark in a different way, although she is unwilling to admit it. She realizes that Clark is as important to her as getting a story, when



confronted by her rival for both the news and his attention. When Clark “leaves” the Planet to work with Linda at the Metropolis Star, Lois takes solace in chocolate. Eating chocolate functions as a substitute for the feelings about Clark that Lois refuses to admit. But it is more a sign that Lois is miserable without Clark, as chocolate is commonly believed to produce a feeling of euphoria, explaining why people eat massive amounts when stressed or depressed. But she still refuses to acknowledge her attachment to Clark, in the same way Lee maintains his stereotypical male attitude of taking Amanda for granted. In fact, Lois tries to project her anger onto Clark by attacking his intelligence and professionalism – “She [Linda] waves her skirt at him and he turns into a pathetic little puppy.” (“The Rival”) When she discovers Clark is actually working undercover, her relief overshadows her anger at being left out of an investigation. Instead, she is upset because “you mean I’ve been feeling all these feelings for nothing?” Of course, she refuses to elaborate on “these feelings,” instead becoming coy about them. Lois begins to act flirtatious, being both pleased about not losing Clark and insecure that she won’t always have him around. In denying her feelings, she gives in to them and lets them control her actions, showing that she is focusing more on a life with Clark than on her career.

Friendship is important in a working relationship. Ideally, a sociable attachment helps the partners to think and act in similar ways, creating a more efficient team. This is the kind of relationship that Lee and Amanda develop in

Scarecrow and Mrs. King. As Lee realizes that Amanda is very capable of analyzing situations and reacting correctly, he begins to respect her. But he still clings to his ingrained sense of male dominance. While he starts to see Amanda more as friend and not just as co-worker, he becomes convinced that he is personally responsible for her safety. He even puts his own career in jeopardy when he trades a Russian agent for Amanda, who has been mistaken for "Scarecrow" and kidnapped. ("Saved By the Bells") In contrast to his earlier attitude, Lee is willing to retrain Amanda after her memory loss in "I Am Not Now, Nor Have I Ever Been, a Spy," an increasing acknowledgment of Amanda as his partner.

By the end of the second season, Lee cannot imagine working without her; however, he doesn't ever tell her. This situation suggests the stereotype of husbands who assume because they go to work, mow the yard, and take out the trash, their wives know that they are loved. So, when in "Brunettes Are In," Amanda decides to leave the Agency because she thinks Lee does not respect her or her work, he is astonished. Such a situation is recognizable to anyone in the workplace, but more so to women. The assertion of power can be strengthening in itself because the assertion is closely related to a self-realization of power. Once that power is established, as Amanda does in this episode, then relationships begin to change and that change can be controlled. When Amanda learns that she can evoke such responses from Lee, she sets out to make the relationship more conducive to her career goals.

This episode establishes the theme of Lee and Amanda as a truly equal team – being kidnapped together, escaping together, and capturing villains together. It is also in this episode that Lee actually tells Amanda that he considers her a partner, although it is doubtful he would have done so if Amanda had not threatened to leave the Agency. This shows, to some extent, the power that Amanda has in the relationship – that she can force Lee to examine his feelings and acknowledge them. Feminine experience and knowledge overcome the stereotypical male difficulty in considering the female to be equal. The acceptance of gender equality allows for the acknowledgment of women's power or knowledge, even in traditionally masculine areas.

Personal involvement complicates Lois and Clark's partnership even more. Just as Amanda becomes more self-assured as Scarecrow and Mrs. King progresses, Lois' insecurities about her personal life gradually spill over into her professional life. When she finds out in "The Source" that she can be replaced professionally as Clark's partner by someone just as pushy and ambitious as herself, she believes Clark could just as easily replace her as his friend. She buries her anxiety about losing her job and her work partner in the investigation. It is this brashness and false bravado that cover the vulnerability resulting from Lois' inability to form long-lasting relationships. Clark, understanding her frenzy, willingly assists her. When Clark offers her protection and comfort in "The Prankster," she realizes that she can trust him and that he has no ulterior motives for helping her. Lois is so used to manipulating people and using them

to get a story, she assumes everyone else does the same and resists genuine offers of assistance. Gradually, the "hack from Smallville" wears down her defenses and she puts her trust in Clark. Lois' realization that Clark is Superman endangers this trust. She is hurt, but less so as a result of self-realization than the shock of being informed by a third party (as in "Tempus Fugitive"). However, Lois' prior knowledge of Clark's personality helps her understand his motive for keeping the secret as she tells him, "I get it, I really do. It's logical, even thoughtful." ("We Have a Lot to Talk About")

The way in which Lois comes to this conclusion is significant in itself. Rather than being told, she senses it from a touch on her cheek. This is a very emotional and, hence, stereotypically feminine method, as opposed to the logic of investigating facts. Lois herself has made the statement, "facts, I can deal with those," indicating a discomfort with emotions. But now that Lois is shifting her attention from her career to Clark and a personal life, her emotions appear to have taken over her analytical abilities. But apparently her analytical skills were flawed, as she was unable to see past Clark's glasses to Superman underneath. From the beginning, Lois' power of deduction appears less than accurate, foreshadowing her reliance on emotions and feeling when involved with Clark.

While this thesis primarily addresses the development of Amanda King and Lois Lane, it should be pointed out that the development of Lee Stetson and Clark Kent is significant, as well. The development of the male characters underscores the development of the females. In Scarecrow and Mrs. King,

Amanda grows in confidence from her work and Lee learns to acknowledge his emotions. Lee, in a sense, becomes "feminized;" he acknowledges the importance of female experience in interpersonal skills. Lee tells Amanda in "Utopia Now" that "over the past two years, I've learned about myself, about people – things they don't teach you at the Academy." This is a far cry from the Lee Stetson who initially scoffs at the effectiveness of "woman's intuition." However, while Lois goes through a distinct regression into pre-feminist and postfeminist traits, Clark remains constant throughout the whole series. He is the quietly reassuring, strong silent type. The fact that Clark apparently needs no character development reinforces the interpretation that Lois' "needed" development is apparently based on patriarchal values. Conversely, Amanda's progression goes beyond her individual transformation, she also succeeded in changing her environment; i.e., the attitude of her partner.

It appears that Lois has more to lose than Amanda in emotionally investing in a friendship. Amanda's friendship with Lee helps her further her career, as he encourages her to become a full-time agent. She becomes more confident and more independent, to the point that even if she and Lee did become separated, she could still function well in her career and her personal life. In fact, because of her willingness to sacrifice her friendship with Lee, she becomes empowered both in the personal and in the working relationship ("Brunettes Are In"). Lois, on the other hand, becomes less career-minded and more involved with having a personal life. Her initial insecurities about

relationships develop into a co-dependency upon Clark. In "The Prankster," the prank gifts make her so paranoid that she flees to Clark's apartment. Once there, she feels safe enough to fall asleep on his couch, despite her claims that "I'm a reporter, these aren't the first threats I've received." This co-dependency refocuses Lois' life so sharply that her high school vow goes unfulfilled, marrying Clark without winning her first Pulitzer. But it is such moments of intimacy, in both Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark, that lead to the romantic involvement between the lead characters.

Friendship creates an intimate bond between co-workers. Knowing each other's tendencies makes anticipating plans easier, which in turn makes the teamwork more efficient. Scarecrow and Mrs. King offers a female-friendly and even empowering view of friendship among female and male co-workers. Amanda has the opportunity to learn from Lee and operate on a higher level much faster than other agent-trainees. In Lois and Clark, the friendship is yet another element in Lois' regression. The emotional effort that Lois places in her relationship with Clark causes her to focus more on that relationship and less on her career and work goals.

## **Romantic Involvements**

Television romances traditionally empower the male character. Women become subordinate and are placed in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers. These types of relationships are part of Lesage's "hegemonic female fantasy...a daydream that we women muster up for ourselves, but one that would be pretty socially acceptable" ("The Hegemonic Female Fantasy," 84). In other words, the romance is part of the male ideology that makes women think they want the traditional heterosexual relationship. The relationships of Amanda and Lee and of Lois and Clark are what keep the viewers tuning in episode after episode, wondering if they will or if they won't fall in love. This serial nature of the storyline is similar to the soap opera, a traditional feminine text. The messages about romance that these particular texts present are quite differing. Romance becomes a learning experience for Amanda – the mistakes she makes in some of her relationships help her develop her judgment skills and define what she is looking for in future relationships. Lois, however, does not fare as well. Romance for her is a subjection – from Lex wanting to control her mind and body, to her ambition being overwhelmed by her relationship with Clark.

Because Amanda has already been through one marriage, she is less likely to be starry-eyed about romance. She has a better idea about what she wants in a relationship. The friendship that develops first with Lee is part of Amanda's progression. Her recognition of her own abilities enables her to relate to men on their own grounds and, consequently, to better dictate relationship

terms. The romance with Lee is merely “icing on the cake” of her independence and autonomy. When Joe King finally appears in the third season, the viewers might conclude that there is a possibility for renewed romance between Amanda and Joe. Amanda, however, has moved past that point in her life. To renew the relationship with Joe would be placing herself back in the role of wife and mother, part of the “traditional” family unit. Given her success and satisfaction with her career, it is doubtful a return to domestic life would have fulfilled her. Amanda’s relationship with Lee fulfills her need for independence and power, while giving her the liberty to pursue whatever life and career goals she chooses. However, Lee believes that Joe wants to renew the relationship when he invites Amanda for lunch. Lee attributes this to the change in Amanda over the past two years – “You’re a different woman from the one he left behind. You’re more exciting, more vibrant, more beautiful.” (“Rumors of My Death”) Lee’s statement is loaded with irony, given his earlier disbelief that any man could find Amanda “beautiful, exotic, mysterious.” (“Service Above and Beyond”) Apparently, neither man sees Amanda as a mother with a station wagon and a mortgage. It is true that Amanda has changed; she has discovered an exciting career as a secret agent, been approached by wealthy sophisticated men who find her attractive, and is involved with a man who encourages her independence.

Romantic involvements become a part of Amanda’s progression. Her freedom to engage in these involvements bring a realization that she can be



more than just a housewife or mother. In fact, her romantic options are not just between Joe and Lee or Lee and Dean or Lee and Alan; instead Amanda learns that a full life does not have to include a man at all. Her romantic life becomes quite complicated when she begins working at the Agency, and not just because of her attraction to Lee. Dean quickly exits in the first season because Amanda never seems to find time for him, preferring to be involved in espionage. In the first episode, it is apparent that the relationship bores her. Over the following episodes, there are many scenes with Amanda with her back to her message board that reads "Amanda – CALL DEAN!!" But Amanda is never seen calling him. The character of Dean never appears on screen, enabling the viewers to dismiss him just as easily as does Amanda. He is Amanda's "transitional" relationship, having come on the scene within a year of her divorce. Dean's significance lies in his establishment of Amanda as an attractive, heterosexual female.

Amanda's casual dismissal of Dean could be an argument for the misfortunes that Amanda has with men after Dean and before Lee. But these relationships are job-related, usually with men she has been assigned to follow. An exception is Alan, the professional thief in "The Artful Dodger." He develops a relationship with Amanda because of her connection to the Agency in order to gain access to military secrets. While the relationship is still job-related to a certain extent, Amanda believes it is purely personal. But Amanda begins to consider why Alan does not interest her romantically – whether it is because of

her attraction to Lee or because she wants to concentrate on her career. Since she never pushes the issue of involvement with Lee, apparently she is busy concentrating on her career. In fact, she becomes more upset at jeopardizing national security by her involvement with Alan than at Lee's interrogation of her over the gift of the "concubine ring." Had her priority been a relationship with either man, Amanda would have left the matter of national security to the more qualified agents. Instead, she insists on helping catch Alan, both because of the personal *and* the professional betrayal. Unlike Lois, who questions her judgment when faced with Lex's true nature, Amanda uses this situation to prove that she can escape the traditional relationship role for females. She is able to put her personal feelings aside and continue her work. This behavior contradicts the stereotype of the hysterical female or the vengeful, scorned female. When Alan is captured, Amanda doesn't scream or ask weepily, "How could you?"; she merely watches as he is led away. The ability to put personal feelings aside is traditionally male-oriented; however, Amanda does not carry it to the extreme of emotional detachment. She retains her femininity (and female knowledge and experience) in a masculine setting by controlling, not denying, her emotions.

Although Lee Stetson seems to be the only "safe" romantic involvement for Amanda, she still preserves her autonomy by choosing to keep their working and personal lives separate. Their emotional detachment at work prevents Lee from undue and uninvited heroics, and agent seniority is ignored outside of work.

Since the public knowledge of their relationship could also result in a major change, if not termination, of Amanda and Lee's working relationship, it becomes essential to maintain the detachment.

As mentioned earlier, the already-existing friendship of Amanda and Lee strengthens the romance by allowing them to learn about and accept each other's foibles. A mutual trust has developed between the two, one of the few personal developments that crosses over into their professional lives. In "Stemwinder," Amanda's trust that Lee would not cheat on her leads her to suspect a trap during a sting operation. When Lee comes to say goodbye and tell Amanda he's going "underground" to clear their names, Amanda sums up their relationship with the best line of the whole series – "You can't just walk into my life, hand me a package, tell me to give it to the man in the red hat, tell me that you love me, and walk out of my life again." She also refuses to be left behind in the traditional helpless feminine role. Instead, she insists that she go with Lee, reminding him "we work best as a team." The romantic involvement does influence Lee's decision, as Amanda appeals both on personal and professional grounds, reminding him that she is also under suspicion of treason. However, the romance is put on hold while the couple clear their names. By putting their careers ahead of their relationship, Amanda and Lee are able to prove their innocence and ensure themselves a future. Amanda plays a full and active part in the investigation, and Lee relies heavily on her participation; showing further the extent to which Amanda has become skilled as an agent.

Lois' romantic life is more complicated than Amanda's. But while Amanda's romance with Lee is an added bonus to her personal improvement, Lois lets her romances control her professional and personal life. She actively frets over her lack of a social and romantic life, while trying to convince those around her and herself that her personal life is fulfilling. But she herself is the only one who believes it; she considers interviews to be dates, tells Clark that she has no time for love, and then sits at home crying while watching soap operas. For a savvy career woman, she appears to have little control over her personal life. Because she has invested so much energy in her career, her ability to form healthy relationships has been stunted. Marriage to Lex Luthor is a convenience, and despite her protestations that she "just can't sit around...organizing dinner parties." ("Barbarians at the Planet"), she can accept a job with a corner office at Luthor News Network (LNN). The relationship with Lex has all the trappings of a grand romance — flowers, fine dining, travel, serenades — but no emotion on Lois' part. When Lex is revealed as a criminal, he claims all of his schemes to be acts of love for Lois; in effect, he places the blame for his behavior on her. His actions cause Lois to seriously question her judgment, showing that Lois does indeed lack control over her emotions. This questioning turns into a downward spiral that results in a loss of confidence and ambition on Lois' part, especially concerning personal relationships.

Between Lois' involvements with Lex and with Clark, she — like Amanda — has very little luck finding a steady relationship. The dashing Federal Agent Dan

Scardino comes on the scene, appealing to Lois' need for excitement. But he, like all other men in her life, wants to force his expectations on her. He constantly pressures Lois to make a choice between him and Clark, alienating her. In any case, she realizes that she loves the quiet, reliable Clark who represents a steady homelife. This situation offers an interesting comparison to Amanda, who drops Dean for the excitement and adventure of a secret agent's life and eventually a relationship with Lee. Lois trades the exciting uncertainty of how to get into restricted access areas to obtain top secret information for the predictability of Clark. After Clark shares his secret, Superman's x-ray vision and super speed allow her access to these places, taking away the thrill. In addition, Lois' confidence in Superman as her personal savior downplays – in her mind – the risks that she does take. Unlike Amanda, who chooses excitement at a time when her life should be stable (being there for her mother and sons), Lois chooses to tie herself to home and hearth when she has no real reason to do so. Again, this shows that Lois becomes more domesticated during the course of the series, just as Amanda becomes more career-minded. Where romance is a positive force in Scarecrow and Mrs. King, in Lois and Clark – ten years later – romance has a quite negative effect on female autonomy. Rather than demonstrating the advances of women since the 1970s and 1980s, television in the 1990s chooses to present a “strong” female who actually sets feminism back twenty years or more. Instead of Lois remaining a strong,

independent and *equal* partner of the team, she relies on Clark, both personally and professionally.

Deborah Joy Levine, the creator of Lois and Clark, touted the show as “a love triangle with only two people” (*Entertainment Weekly*, 76). Rather than an empowered female making her own choices, Lois comes across as a fickle woman who can’t get past a pair of glasses. This is what Wilcox calls the “disempowered female gaze” (“Dominant Female, Superior Male,” 30). From such a fragile position, it seems inevitable that Lois would regress into a dependent figure. In a deliciously ironic scene, she tells Superman, “If you had no powers at all, if you were just an ordinary man leading an ordinary life, I’d love you just the same.” (“Barbarians at the Planet”) Lois is so blinded by the fantasy surrounding Superman, that she doesn’t even realize that the “ordinary man leading an ordinary life” is indeed Clark. Clark rejects Lois, because he wants to be loved for himself and not for what he can do. Lois lets go of her attraction to Superman almost too easily, appearing fickle. As she and Clark grow closer, Lois appears to become less sure of herself; unlike Amanda, whose relationship with Lee enhances her professional and personal confidence. When Clark finally asks Lois out on a date, she loses her composure, babbling, “I have a dozen thoughts running through my head – Is my hair OK? Do I have coffee breath? Is there something in my teeth? – all just because you say ‘hi.’ How do you think I’ll be on a date?” (“Phoenix”) Although Lois has known Clark for two years, the relationship becomes unstable

with the introduction of romance. A failed date, probably involving misunderstandings and hurt feelings, could spell disaster for both the working relationship and the friendship. Trying to live up to romantic expectations confuses Lois because she has related to Clark on a mental level until this point. Physical appearance and attraction now play a part in their relationship as they did not before.

Lois' discomfort also stems from relinquishing some control by allowing Clark into her life on a more intimate level. When Lois does learn the truth about Clark's alter-ego, her need to have control over every aspect of her life incites a feeling of hurt and betrayal. After lowering her emotional defenses and learning to trust someone, she feels that Clark has broken that confidence by not trusting her enough to share his secret. But once Clark convinces her of his various reasons for keeping the secret, she realizes that keeping it from her is not worth losing their relationship. By this point, Lois has invested too much effort to consider life without Clark. She accepts the fact that their life together will be unusual and some incidents will be out of her control, a situation that most career women would find hard to accept. But when Clark decides they should separate for Lois' own protection, she is hurt deeply because she has no input about a situation that affects both of them. Clark takes over as the traditional male, controlling the relationship and further disempowering Lois.

Even when Lois tries to assert her independence about relationships in her own life, she is placed in situations where she is physically or emotionally

endangered, such as almost being offered to Druid gods as a sacrifice. Clark realizes that he can't live without Lois, but she does not comply so easily this time. She tells him, "Saving my life does not give you the right to live my life. Nobody has that right but me." ("When Irish Eyes are Killing") She asserts her independence from Clark, but becomes miserable. This emotional upheaval indicates how much Lois has reprioritized her life, as not even her work distracts her from her unhappiness. When they reconcile, Lois regresses even more into the submissive female role. Clark calls her 'honey' and she fairly oozes and tells him, "Clark, marrying you is the most incredible thing that's ever happened to me...You are the man I never thought I'd meet." ("I Now Pronounce You...") The Lois Lane in the first season is not the kind of woman who thinks about the man she would meet and marry, preferring to concentrate on her career.

Lois has now become a postfeminist figure, wanting to hold on to her career and her personal life, but giving more importance to her personal life. In "It's a Small World After All," Clark assures Lois that "whatever happens to you or me, happens to us." But he refuses to let Lois see him in his shrunken state, again exhibiting the traditional male desire to work out problems alone. Lois begs him, "Don't ask me to walk away from you — I don't know how to do that," showing the female desire to always be helpful and cling to the male no matter what happens. When they finally exchange wedding vows, Lois looks at Clark and says, "This is it, isn't it...This is when our lives really start," ("Swear to God...") showing a reliance on a man to complete her life. Despite the fact that



their wedding vows pronounce them "husband and wife," a more fitting pronouncement would have been the "man and wife" used in Amanda and Lee's wedding. The pronouncements for each wedding are contradictory, as Amanda is an equal partner in her and Lee's relationship, while Lois relies on Clark for emotional and professional support.

In addition to her own insecurities, outside factors force Lois to rely increasingly on Clark, both physically and mentally. Lois and Clark encounter many obstacles to their relationship that situate her in a powerless and endangered position. When they finally reconcile and plan to marry, Lois is kidnapped and replaced with a clone. Then New Kryptonians show up and whisk Clark away to prevent civil war, leaving Lois behind on Earth. Finally, a psychiatric patient put in jail by Lois and Clark escapes and plans to ruin their wedding. But even when they actually take their vows, H.G. Wells shows up and tells them that if they consummate their marriage, Lois will die from a curse placed on the couple centuries ago. Clark literally has to fight to save Lois so he can have sex with her, traveling back in time and dueling for her honor. This is the apex of male dominance in this series, with the male figure controlling and resolving the situation with no input or action on the part of the female. For women preparing to enter the twenty-first century, there should be a much more positive and female-oriented message than this one. All of these incidents might justify some anxiety and emotional instability in Lois, but she becomes absolutely paranoid and hysterical. Even after the wedding, Lois is convinced

that the "gods like for us to get nice and happy, then boom!" ("Soul Mates") She has totally lost faith that her life or her destiny is in her own hands. By the fourth season, Lois and Clark suggests the acceptability of the female surrendering control to the male, due to male superiority in handling difficult situations.

Amanda and Lois could survive without their romantic leads. But based on Lois' behavior after she and Clark become involved, she would have a less fulfilled life. Lois lets her romantic status control her life, letting her anxieties about relationships spill over into anxieties about every part of her life. Her insecurities about character judgment prevent her from making accurate judgments about her stories, adversely affecting her career. Amanda, on the other hand, keeps her personal life and career more separated than Lois. Having to keep her and Lee's relationship a secret does make this easier, but Amanda's confidence in herself as *an individual* and not just as part of a team also helps her solve problems. In marrying Clark, Lois has thoroughly combined her work and career to the point that both are incomplete because specific attention is paid to neither. Since Lois' actions in both her personal and her professional life affect Clark, she has to consider his feelings. She becomes a weak nurturing female, just as Amanda was at the beginning of Scarecrow and Mrs. King.

## **Professional Relationships and Power Issues**

The personal relationships between the lead characters in Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark influence their work relationships. As each couple becomes more personally involved, the work relationship becomes more team-oriented. However, the term "teamwork" has different meanings in Scarecrow and Mrs. King than in Lois and Clark. Amanda uses the professional relationship to progress from a passive female figure to an autonomous career woman, while Lois digresses from a strong personality into a subservient postfeminist figure.

At the beginning of each series, Amanda and Lois exhibit stereotypical female personalities. Amanda muddles her way through a case, dependent on Lee for guidance and support. In direct contrast, Lois plays the stereotypical aggressive female by *placing herself* in a position of superiority over her new partner Clark. She does this on her own, without permission from the male hierarchy. However, as each show and relationship progresses, Amanda becomes more assertive and confident as an agent, while Lois buries her individuality in a journalistic team effort.

Both shows initially convey a sexist attitude that women need male partners. Amanda and Lois initially appear ineffectual without male partnership, although Amanda later proves to be a competent agent apart from Lee. Both females are involved in traditionally male careers — espionage and journalism — threatening the male-oriented balance of power. The partnership keeps both

female characters within the acceptable parameters of male ideology. This device succeeds in Lois and Clark, since Clark's superpowers give him a physical and mental advantage over Lois and any enemies. In Scarecrow and Mrs. King, the partnership becomes yet another tool for Amanda's development as a strong, independent woman because Lee has no superpowers and Amanda can perform on similar physical and mental levels.

Two constructed images of Amanda and Lois function in Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark. The first image deals with how they conform to the traditional female roles that are in society and on television. The second image consists of how the male characters within the text see the female lead. These two images develop separately and emphasize the progression of Amanda and the regression of Lois. In Scarecrow and Mrs. King, both images point out the deficiencies of male dominance, while in Lois and Clark, they discredit Lois as a serious career woman. Because Amanda relies on her feminine experience and not just traditional male linear logic, male villains often underestimate her abilities as an agent. Lois, on the other hand, tries to be strong and independent (or masculine); her attempts fail because of Superman's tendency to rescue her.

The discrepancies between the two images in Scarecrow and Mrs. King accentuate Amanda's progression to an independent figure because of her ability to use her "helpless female" exterior to unexpectedly perform traditionally masculine duties. In "Service Above and Beyond," Amanda pretends to be a

lonely glamorous widow to gain information from an arms dealer. Her charade allows her to be present at the negotiations for an American missile and gather evidence for the dealer's conviction. Early in the series, her "helpless female" character sometimes relies on luck, but she learns to cultivate the role. Quite often, she plays the lost, confused female to throw villains off guard while she or Lee grabs evidence on them.

Lois doesn't successfully cultivate an "undercover" persona. Even when investigating stories, she acts just as brash and aggressive as she normally does. Because Clark's x-ray vision allows him easy access to villains' lairs, Lois is unnecessary as a team player. So, in Lois and Clark, both images of Lois portray her under the care and guidance of the males around her, a rather subordinate position. Even when Lois sneaks off to investigate on her own, as in "Honeymoon in Metropolis," Clark saves her when the villains unexpectedly arrive. Lois is not even aware of some of her rescues, and Clark chooses to let her believe that she is lucky.

Lee's control over information also keeps Amanda subordinate, at least in the beginning. By withholding information about the cases, Lee maintains Amanda's dependency on him for direction and protection. She initially is the "window dressing" that Lois fears becoming when she learns Clark is Superman. To her credit, Amanda does not take this role quietly. As soon as she discovers the nature of their cases, she manages to get in on the action, usually saving Lee's life instead of him saving hers. Amanda saving Lee is a sub-theme

throughout the series, from the helicopter rescue in "The First Time" to forcing him to go to the doctor's in "Bad Timing." Despite her contribution to the team, Lee tries to dissuade her from being an agent, but Amanda *chooses* to continue. It is Amanda's choices that define the parameters of her and Lee's working relationship. Lee's failure to acknowledge his partnership with Amanda prompts her to resign from the Agency. This decision forces Lee into recognizing Amanda's skills and rethinking his opinion of her. She not only wants to be equal, she also wants Lee to recognize her as his equal. In order to preserve the female-male team effort, Amanda's -- and ultimately, the Feminine -- efforts and skills are recognized and given due respect. The strengthening of a female character typically threatens the male order; but in this case, it averts a larger crisis of disunity in the heterosexual relationship. Amanda's abilities satisfy Lee's shortcomings as an agent -- to remove her from the partnership would bring those inadequacies out in the open, revealing male weaknesses. Thus, the character of Amanda fulfills a "resistant" role that appears to support the male hierarchy but in fact promotes feminism.

Lois presents more of a threat to masculine authority with her outspoken ambition and direct attempts to control the female-male relationship than does Amanda. This threat explains the attempt in "Pheromone, My Lovely" to fit Lois' character into the male ideology of female submissiveness. In this first season episode, she is under the influence of pheromones, causing her to act in a manner completely opposite of her normal character. The situation suggests

masculine attempts to get a woman drunk, to take advantage of her. The suppression of her inhibitions “allows” her to act out her secret fantasies and true feelings; she is logically and emotionally “drunk.” She flits around in a lacy dress, asking Clark “Whatcha working on?” “What are we looking for?” “Where ya goin’?” instead of making her usual keen observations. This behavior suggests Lois’ inclination toward a traditional feminine role and foreshadows the diminishing of her ambition. Even when she recovers her professional demeanor, she is still emotionally “hungover” -- humiliated and angry -- while Clark remains the rational partner who discovers the villain’s true plot.

Lois exhibits the characteristics of a postfeminist, initially focusing on her career, but still regretting her lack of a social life and her single status. Over the course of the series, she moves closer to the “simpler” life of dominant, protective males and subordinate females. She trades her identity to achieve this life, something that Amanda manages to retain even though she has already been a housewife and mother. Lois goes from being “Lois Lane, award-winning reporter” to Lois Lane of “Lane and Kent, Metropolis’ Hottest News Team.” Her public persona is permanently linked with Clark’s. In addition, Lois becomes an object used by villains to get to Superman, with no real purpose of her own. Lois and Clark offers a negative image of women with this position, that they are merely items used for male purposes.

Lois and Clark’s promotion of male superiority increases steadily over its four seasons. By the third season, Lois is scrambling for a balance of power in

her relationship with Clark. Lois believes that she has a balance in the relationship, but learning Clark's secret shows her error. To soften the blow of keeping the secret from her, Clark tells her that he did it to protect her, not because of a fear of betrayal. This action emphasizes the attitude toward Lois: her male associates allow her to present the image of a professional; what they do behind her back shows how they really see her. Clark, Perry and Jimmy make sure that Lois is safe, happy and healthy. This protection ranges from forcing her to take personal time off work to independent investigations into Lex's criminal activities. But Lois appears unwilling or unable to perform such sensible actions, because she is so consumed with her own interests, such as her stories, marriage to Lex, etc.

Even when Clark's superpowers are transferred to Lois, she turns to Clark for guidance. Lois' *pink* costume in "Ultrawoman" reminds the viewers that she is still feminine, and therefore weak. Instead of focusing on what she could do, the writers choose to prove that even with superpowers, Lois is not Clark's equal. She becomes upset at her inability to prioritize calls for help, and tells him, "it doesn't make me feel good doing what you were born to do" ("Ultrawoman"). This is an obvious acknowledgment of male superiority, a statement that is soberingly transferable to occupations other than flying superheroes. Rather than face the pressure to succeed as a female in a traditionally male role, Lois becomes upset and wishes for a return to their "normal" relationship. This desire indicates a lack of ambition on Lois' part to



define herself on her own terms, preferring instead to be defined in a patriarchal society. Lois now fits into male ideology and is "rewarded" with her man -- who conveniently keeps her attached to her "career" -- and a baby, creating the utopian family unit.

Male ideology receives less positive treatment in Scarecrow and Mrs. King. Amanda begins her career with the characteristics that Lois later develops. But instead of the characteristics keeping Amanda in a subordinate position, she uses them to her advantage. She displays traditional feminine qualities of the nurturer (saving Lee's life) and the submissive female (recognizing male superiority). However, these qualities enhance the progression of her own skills and independence. She begins as a housewife, a traditionally powerless figure in the male hierarchy. Because of her unassuming demeanor, she has an edge in espionage -- she blends in well in just about any situation. However, her most common assignment casts her as Lee's wife, relegating her to a submissive and domestic position. "There Goes the Neighborhood" typifies this status where Amanda has "all the boxes unpacked, glasses washed, and shelf paper down," while Lee has only hung a yak's head. This trophy object, associated with stereotypical male hunter-supplier roles, points to Lee's role as leader and metaphorical "hunter" in their working relationship. While Amanda does contribute to the case-solving, she is still kept in her place as a part-time assistant with few skills. Even when Lee recognizes Amanda's contributions, she initially passes most of the credit back to him.

As Amanda demonstrates her increasing skills, the Agency awards her new responsibilities, often without from Lee's involvement. These errands make use of her housewifely role, such as receipt of a microchip at a laundromat or casual surveillance of visiting royalty at a public school. The significance of these assignments is that Lee is only indirectly involved, showing that Amanda could function as an agent without him. Even when she is directly recognized as a threat, her abilities and feminine knowledge are underrated. As in "Photo Finish," the villains expect her to follow the Agency textbook; however, they were unfamiliar with her unusual method of deduction. A simple security check reveals the selling of military secrets when Amanda suspects the overuse of floor wax at a weapons plant. Most highly trained agents ignore such details, focusing on inflated bank accounts and secret rendezvous as clues. The villains did not think a mere housewife/agent trainee could uncover such an ingenious plot, and their sexism leads to their capture. Such plots – Scarecrow and Mrs. King offers many plots similar to this one – underline the importance of the female experience and the danger of sexism.

Both series stress the importance of female experience. Amanda's possession equates success while Lois' lack causes her to give in to male dominance. Despite the focus on the female's contribution, male protection of the female still plays an important role in each series. Lee feels responsible for getting Amanda into the Agency, and takes it upon himself to protect her. He constantly warns her, "stay out of trouble, try not to call unnecessary attention to

yourself," ("Service Above and Beyond") playing the dominant male role of protector and teacher. Of course, she rarely takes this advice. Instead, she is frustrated at her restraints, finally telling Lee, "That's what always happens – I start and you take over." ("Lovely Affair") Amanda represents resistance to the traditional male protection. Because she acts independently *and* effectively, she does not suffer retribution for disobedience as Lois does. Of course, Amanda's impetuous acts usually benefit the team, making them acceptable under male ideology. But again, Amanda's seemingly traditional exterior camouflages her real significance as an autonomous female. Even when they are on equal footing, Lee mistakenly attempts to protect Amanda from "unnecessary worry." But she exhibits dominance by refusing to let him work alone; as she reminds Lee, "We work best as a team." ("Stemwinder") Amanda's willingness to work as part of a team gives her an opportunity to prove the importance of feminine knowledge and experience by exposing her partner and supervisors to them. When her ability to connect with other females in "It's In the Water" proves more effective than the helicopters and SWAT teams, she and Lee are put in charge of finding the terrorist. Her performance so impresses Lee that even he tries light-hearted conversation instead of interrogation in his investigations. Not only does Amanda acquire investigative skills, but Lee also refines his with the incorporation of more sensitive (or feminine) methods.

Lois and Clark presents the importance of female experience by showing how Lois suffers from a lack of positive feminine knowledge, which leads her to

rely on stereotypical negative female qualities. Lois tends to work for herself, not the good of her male partner or the team. She does not want to share duties or successes with Clark, and she possesses no unique feminine knowledge to share and benefit their partnership. Her isolation from her female co-workers forces her to associate with the males around her, and seek emotional support from them. In "Pilot," she becomes overwhelmed and turns into Clark's arms at the sight of an electrocuted man, just after telling him, "Don't be silly, I've seen it all – war, crime, famine" This request continues through her various cries of "help, Superman, help." Even in "It's a Small World," a miniaturized Clark refuses to let Lois see him, telling her, "I have to handle this alone." He later leaves her a note reading, "Lois, it's too dangerous – stay put till you hear from me." In a situation where a woman would normally use her nurturing instincts, Lois has none. Instead, she tries to resolve the situation herself. Although Amanda often takes matters into her own hands, Lois' danger lies in that at this point in the series, she has already subjected herself to the male's (Clark's) protection and control. She tracks down the villain, who shoots at Lois. This is both a retributive action and a defining action. Even though Lois performs potentially empowering acts, she is placed in danger for disobeying Clark. In addition, Clark saves her life, reminding her again that she is under *his* protection. Lois' inability to function as an equal is a result of her lack of female experience, and thus, her lack of female power.

While male figures traditionally protect the female, Scarecrow and Mrs. King offers a untraditional scenario of an empowered female protecting and rescuing the male. Amanda saves Lee's life more often than he saves her. In the first episode, she goes to the house where Lee is being held and flies him out in a helicopter (despite her lack of flying skills), rescuing him while wearing a den mother uniform. The uniform shows Amanda's adaptability between her domestic life and her career. Like Lois' pink Ultrawoman costume, Amanda's uniform accentuates her femininity. However, the camouflage allows Amanda to play on the male perception of female helplessness and become an unanticipated heroine. But even when the situation is not "life-or-death," her input is still critical to the success of the team. Scarecrow and Mrs. King actually promotes a partnership of equality between the female and male partners when faced with danger. Rather than promoting male superiority, this show promotes equality and harmony between the sexes. The setting and atmosphere are idealistic, but the concept of women and men working toward the same goals appears attainable.

Clark's superpowers tip the balance of power in favor of males and present an insurmountable obstacle to gender equality in Lois and Clark. Because Superman is nearly invincible, Lois has virtually no opportunity to rescue him. Instead, she throws herself into danger, due to her ambition and desire to break a story first. The pilot of this series establishes a pattern, as Superman saves Lois and carries her safely to the Planet, in an

uncharacteristically speechless condition. Annoyed with her inane behavior, Lois then scrambles to establish her claim to Superman as a primary source. This association puts her in a dangerous position, because villains do not see her as a threat, but as bait with which to capture Superman, again objectifying the female to be used by the male.

With both female characters, a direct correlation exists between their contribution to the team and the amount of power gained in the relationship. Amanda's tendency to brainstorm, evaluate, and execute makes her more valuable to Lee than Lois is to Clark or Superman. Lee not only finds these qualities beneficial to their assignments, but attractive on a personal level. Because the physical attraction is present from the beginning in Lois and Clark, Clark's main concern is Lois' safety. He often negates her ideas if an element of danger, irrational assumptions, or ethical conflict are involved. Lois does possess talents that helped her gain her status as a journalist, but in the face of Clark's superpowers, these abilities are meager. She also has no real way of stopping Clark from flying into situations or scooping her up in his arms to be carried away from danger.

Traditional feminine knowledge and experience are necessary in Scarecrow and Mrs. King, since Amanda and Lee have to work together to solve professional and personal problems. Amanda's feminine experience becomes an asset; as Lee recognizes the importance of her knowledge and experiences. The combination of her domestic knowledge and analytical skills are an early

asset. She uses traditionally feminine text in a masculine atmosphere to uncover the most unlikely illegal schemes. The following tirade is one such example:

"She's standing there, she's got wet hair. She's desperate – if she doesn't do something soon, it's gonna frizz all out. Out in the garage, she's got boxes and boxes of those hairdryers. So what does she do? I'll tell you what she does – she goes out there and she opens one of the boxes. And that's what Harriet tells the company and that's what gets her in trouble and that's what gets her killed!" ("Neighborhood")

What initially seems to be pointless feminine babbling actually leads to the detection and shutdown of a huge arms smuggling ring. The feminine experience becomes an analytical tool for crime-fighting but without becoming masculinized. The experience and knowledge maintain their unique qualities of non-linear logic and peaceable solution.

In Lois and Clark, feminine knowledge and experience play very little part in Lois' career. Her knowledge and experience are useless, as Clark (as Superman) controls both their lives. Because of this control, Lois attempts to model herself on her male counterparts in journalism, displaying a detached – unemotional, *unfeminine* – image. She appears to be a hard-boiled career woman, with no time for romance or a personal life – a direct attack by the program on traditional female submissiveness, a submissiveness that the character of Lois later exhibits. Clark describes Lois as "complicated, domineering, uncompromising, pig-headed...brilliant." ("Pilot") This description emphasizes the difficulty in defining Lois' character as an intelligent career

woman who is fooled by a pair of glasses and voluntarily submits to the male hierarchy.

The ties to a surrogate family appear as early as the first season, in an attempt to redefine Lois as a wife (for Clark), a mother (for Jimmy), and a daughter (for Perry). She struggles with solving problems for her "family" because of her lack of feminine knowledge. Although she attempts to break free from these ties, she creates additional and more dangerous ties with Lex Luthor. She soon flees back to the safety of her "family," returning to her "rightful" place as the submissive female. Her lack of feminine knowledge works against her, because she is unable to form healthy relationships. Her most common mistake in relationships is the relinquishing of power and individuality.

Because of her lack of feminine experience and knowledge, Lois resorts to manipulation of Clark to control their relationship. Her discovery of his secret identity complicates their work relationship, as she tries to take advantage of their personal relationship. She attempts to point out their professional partnership and its obligations: "We're a team, remember? Lane and Kent;" to which Clark responds, "Lane and Kent, yes, but this is a job for Superman" ("When Irish Eyes are Killing"). The manipulation gets her nowhere, as Clark flies off to save the world, leaving Lois helpless and alone. Clark's ability to fly signifies his freedom to go where and when he pleases, leaving Lois behind and powerless in the relationship; in a sense, signifying the male freedom and power in a relationship as opposed to the female subjection. Even in her own



daydreams, Lois cannot break free from the male hierarchy that defines her professional relationship with Clark and with Superman. In these daydreams – wonderfully done spoofs of I Love Lucy and James Bond movies in “Don’t Tug on Superman’s Cape” – female aggressiveness is met with comedic, yet decisive consequences. Despite all her efforts, Superman, like James Bond, “did what he did alone,” (“Don’t Tug on Superman’s Cape”) and Clark did what he did *with* Lois, not *for* her. This situation refutes Lois’ statement of “you’re not working with me, you’re working *for* me” (“Pilot”) at their first encounter; again, her regression into a submissive female character is made clear.

Issues of authority in Lois and Clark relate directly to Lois’ ambition and struggle for power. She jealously guards her byline, as it signifies her “acceptance” into the predominately male world of journalism. She is justifiably resentful of being paired with a rookie, being an award-winning reporter herself. Rhonda Wilcox addresses Lois’ response in “Dominant Female, Superior Male:” “She [Lois] makes it eminently clear that she does not want to train someone who will then share the byline and the glory for which she has worked so hard” (“Dominant Female, Superior Male,” 29). But she often has to rely on Clark for his input whether she realizes it or not – he is her ace scoop, Superman. But, as Clark, he also gradually becomes an integral part of “Lane and Kent,” the news team advertised on billboards all over Metropolis.

Amanda’s progression relies not only on her feminine experience, but also on her developed analytical skills. Instead of being defined as a submissive

female under control of the men in her personal and professional life, Amanda becomes professionally androgynous. Her value lies in her skills and abilities, not in her gender. The most important symbols of her status are her security badge and gun. The badge identifies her as part of the Agency, and the gun is a traditional symbol of male power. Her possession of these two items signifies her entry into the male world of espionage and her successful transition from a powerless housewife into an independent career woman. Because she retains her feminine knowledge and experience, she also retains her personal identity as a woman. When Amanda is mistaken for the Scarecrow, her captor tells her, "You are a remarkable combination of delightful innocence and uncompromising professionalism." ("Saved by the Bells") This combination, rather than complete professionalism, is exactly what makes her valuable as an agent. Lois' claim to professionalism is often discredited by her habit of rashly following a story without thought to the consequences. Her actions allow Clark to seem not only physically superior, but mentally superior as well.

Scarecrow and Mrs. King promotes gender equality, as Amanda progresses from a domestic, traditionally weak female figure to an independent, confident career woman. The feminine is elevated to the status of the masculine, indicating the necessity of working together to improve the condition of each. The opposite appears to be true for Lois and Clark. Lois regresses from a savvy investigative reporter to a domesticated postfeminist. Male

**superiority is promoted over female experience and knowledge, placing the woman in a subordinate position.**

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Part of the framework for this thesis is a belief that television, through, its fantasy role, is a social messenger. George Gerbner, well known for his cultivation studies on television violence, sees television as a "new state religion...offering a universal curriculum for all people" ("Television: The New State Religion," 2150). From this statement, it is easy to surmise that television reaches the masses with a common message about social and cultural values. Viewers watch television initially as a means of entertainment or escape from everyday life, and quite often take their social and cultural cues from the programming. Whether this action itself is harmful or beneficial is not relevant to this study; what is relevant is what social and cultural cues are taken. The examination of Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark looked at some of the social and cultural roles of females and males on television, and found that these particular roles can support both male superiority and resistant feminism.

The fact that the same types of roles can support two opposing issues is part of Fiske's polysemic nature of television text. This model addresses the concern that people can read what they want to into television texts, although what they read may not be necessarily correct or what was intended. Television's polysemic nature is based on the social and cultural values of the individual – what the individual believes about society is what she or he reads into a television text. Therefore, these values still, in a sense, dictate what is meant in the roles, situations, and dialogue in a television program.

For feminist scholars, addressing both the social and cultural values surrounding the presentation of the female character on television and the social and cultural values affecting the viewer's interpretation of the female character on television is important. Television has become such an integral part of American and Western society that, in my opinion, diatribes against television programming and viewing are pointless. What would be more productive is study of attitudes presented in television programming and an understanding of how existing cultural and social values held by the individual interpret those attitudes. This thesis attempted to examine the significance of feminine experience and knowledge and the role of relationships in female-male professional partnerships on television from a feminist perspective. Because Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark cater to a predominantly female audience, the presentation of female roles is especially significant by the social and cultural cues presented for women.

Relationships play a major role in the development of both Amanda King and Lois Lane. These relationships define the female characters and emphasize the authority issues addressed in Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark. Contrary to the stereotype that feminism encourages male-bashing, it instead respects relationships between women and men. The relationship between Amanda and Lee is positive, showing how women and men can cooperate without either gender being subjected to the other. Lois and Clark shows the dangers of not realizing or understanding the significance of the

female experience. Because Lois does not possess feminine experience and knowledge, she is unsure how to define herself in relation to both women and men around her.

In Scarecrow and Mrs. King, feminine experience and knowledge are positive elements. Amanda solves crimes by using these qualities and helps her male partner improve his investigative skills by incorporating them. When she combines feminine skills with traditionally masculine analytical skills, she becomes a top-notch, if slightly unorthodox, agent. Amanda's skills and subsequent recognition indicate an equality between the partners. By the third season, Amanda and Lee share the investigative duties, each taking a fair share of the glamorous and the menial tasks.

Feminine knowledge and experience are absent in Lois and Clark, weakening Lois as a female role model. She appears increasingly unstable as the series progresses because she possesses no idea of her female value and places herself in the care of the men around her. Male strength, in the form of Clark/Superman, is the only "guiding" element in her life. The superpowers of Superman indicate an endorsement of male superiority, as Lois often gets into trouble and only Clark/Superman can help her out. She is never shown making her own escape plans; she learns to rely on a man to rescue her.

The presentation of authority reflects the development of each female character. Scarecrow and Mrs. King promotes gender equality, as Amanda progresses from a domestic, traditionally weak female figure to an independent,

confident career woman. In the process, she also influences others to change. Her male partner, Lee, also progresses from a "lone-wolf style," ("The First Time") excessively physical agent to an agent willing to defer to his slightly less experienced, but almost always correct, partner. He acknowledges the importance of feminine knowledge and its use in analysis and investigating. The feminine is elevated to the status of the masculine, indicating the necessity of working together to improve the condition of each to achieve personal and professional goals.

In Lois and Clark, the male is solely responsible for the well-being of both the male and the female. Under these conditions, Lois' regression is inevitable. Going from "Lois Lane, award winning reporter" to part of the popular news team "Lane and Kent" robs her of her independence and her ambition. She expresses the postfeminist sentiment that women cannot have fulfilled lives when they are forced to choose between careers and traditional homelives. But she also rejects a feminist stance by giving up her autonomy to hold on to Clark. By the end of the series, her focus is on Clark, their difficulties in having children, and their desire for a home rather than on her ambition to win a Pulitzer Prize for journalism.

Relationships influence the manner in which both Amanda and Lois develop, by offering outlets for emotions and direction through life experiences. The two women have very different family structures. Amanda is a divorced mother of two, living with her mother; Lois is a single woman living alone.

Amanda's relationship with her mother helps her understand and appreciate the advances that women have gained through feminism, prompting her to take advantage of every opportunity offered. Lois takes advantage of feminism's advances, but does not really appreciate them. Her relationship with her mother annoys her, because she fears becoming just like her mother. The irony of this fear is that Lois does become like Ellen, neurotic and dependent on her husband to take care of her. Since Ellen also does not possess the positive female experience and knowledge that Amanda and Dottie have, she sets a negative female example for Lois. Lois, having no other role model, follows her mother's path to submissiveness. Lois and Clark suggests, like Scarecrow and Mrs. King, that female experience — both positive and negative — is inherited, indicating the need to reach older women as well as younger women with feminist messages.

Maternal relationships especially influence the relationships that Amanda and Lois form with other women. Because Amanda and Dottie have a positive relationship, Amanda has normal relationships with women around her. Even the initially antagonistic relationship with Francine is smoothed over, because Amanda has learned politeness and grace from her mother. Lois' lack of maternal guidance leaves her ignorant of how to connect emotionally with others. Her aggressiveness appears rude and pushy, and she uses people for what they can do for her. Again, this suggests what occurs when positive feminine experience is absent in a woman's life.



Even the lack of a male authority figure works against Lois. She is unsure how to relate to men, since her father was never at home. Being a con-artist, his presence would not have offered a positive male figure anyway. Although nothing is known about Amanda's father, Dottie appears to have fond memories of her late husband, indicating a stable home life for the young Amanda. Because Amanda already has a familial emotional support group, she does not create one in the workplace as Lois does with Perry, Clark, and Jimmy. Lois takes on the traditional female role at the Planet even as she attempts to project an image of competence and ambition.

Romantic relationships and professional relationships especially delineate Amanda's and Lois' characters. Since these relationships involve their male counterpart, they become the focus (or sub-plot) of both series. The romance and careers are intertwined, although Amanda and Lee have to keep their romance a secret from their superiors to keep from being assigned new partners. The more intimately involved the couples become, the closer and more productive the professional relationship becomes. However, Lois' cooperation is more obligatory than Amanda's, since Clark's superpowers leave her with little input about her own safety and plans for her personal and professional life. While ten years separate the two series, the earlier Scarecrow and Mrs. King clearly offers a more positive female image than Lois and Clark. Lois turns to fantasy and romance to fulfill her life, while Amanda overcomes sexism and resistance from her future partner to achieve a fulfilling career.

These points support the initial thesis that relationships play a significant role in Amanda King's progression as a feminist figure and Lois Lane's regression to a postfeminist figure. My hope in examining these two series was that the portrayal of women, when paired with male leads, had improved over the past ten years. What I found was that no significant progress has been made, if Lois and Clark is any indication. Of course, Lois and Clark is not the only show on television, much less the only show that features a female-male pairing. A cursory glance at these shows (X-Files, Silk Stalkings, La Femme Nikita, among others) show many of the same elements that keep Lois and Clark from being truly feminist – male overprotectiveness, an illusion created by male colleagues to let the female believe she is equal to the male, and an ignorance of the female experience. There have been others shows that initially appear to present the female as stronger – Spy Games, Mr. and Mrs. Smith – but they have been short-lived, lasting less than six episodes. Whether these shows were canceled because of a lack of an audience or because the female leads threatened the male hierarchy is certainly worthy of speculation.

The common thread of all these shows, including Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark, is the element of fantasy. As mentioned earlier, Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark both cater to a predominantly female audience. These two shows also appear to be light-hearted, purely entertaining programs. However, through this relatively benign appearance, significant social and cultural values are presented. I can only offer personal

experience with these shows to support this hypothesis, as I myself began watching these two shows for simple entertainment and upon becoming familiar with the characters, began to question why they acted in particular ways in certain situations. This questioning then lead to questioning social and cultural roles and eventually, the writing of this thesis. As I consider myself an "average viewer," I am fairly sure that other viewers follow the same path of passively viewing, then internally questioning cultural and social roles on television. This questioning can manifest itself by actively speaking out about the roles portrayed on television; but more likely, subtle changes occur in the viewer's own social and cultural perceptions and actions. These actions can work positively or negatively, depending on the viewer. What is significant is that even in shows that are considered "light viewing," important social and cultural values are presented and sometimes challenged.

The overall message of this thesis is that social and cultural values influence both how characters — in this case, female characters — are presented on television and how those values influence an individual's interpretation of those characters. It is easy to view Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark and accept the surface portrayals of Amanda King and Lois Lane. Amanda appears to be a housewife lucky enough to be paired with an experience secret agent who is willing to teach her to be a spy, while Lois appears to be a successful journalist lucky enough to marry her partner who also happens to be a superhero. But a deeper analysis of the two female characters show that

women can be much more than what relationships with the men in their lives define them to be. Amanda does become involved with espionage through fate or luck, but the writers and producers of the show also let this character become more intelligent and independent throughout the course of the series, presenting a strong, positive female image. Lois, on the other hand, becomes more and more reliant upon Clark, but in such a gradual sense that it seems acceptable, even from a feminist standpoint. Lois has a successful career and seems to have a well-balanced personal life; however, her focus is on Clark and his well-being rather than her own needs and desires, a rather pre-feminist position.

The fact that Lois and Clark airs ten years after Scarecrow and Mrs. King may cause concern that the depiction of female characters is regressing. This may be the case; and if so, writers and producers of programming such as these shows need to realize how female characters can be interpreted based on traditional social and cultural values, as well as newer feminist social and cultural values. This is not to say that every line in a script and every set placement needs to be second-guessed and thoroughly examined for political correctness; however, writers and producers do need to be aware of possible alternative and resistant interpretations of their products. In doing this study, I noticed that the presentation of the female lead in each episode was reflected on a macrocosmic level in the overall progression of the series themselves. In other words, the overall progression of Amanda and regression of Lois can be seen on a smaller level within each episode and plot. The plots of Scarecrow

and Mrs. King offered Amanda a chance to prove the importance of her feminine knowledge and experience, while the plots of Lois and Clark often showed Lois' lack of feminine knowledge and experience and the negative consequences thereof.

This thesis is by no means the final authority on the subject of female characterization on television. This particular study only looked at the texts of Scarecrow and Mrs. King and Lois and Clark. Further examination should be done on audience effects and opinions of these two shows, as they relate to each other. One such method could be an experiment using first season episodes and fourth season episodes, with an audience ranking of the characters of Amanda King and Lois Lane on their success in addressing feminist issues in those seasons. In addition to this experiment, interviews with the writers and producers of these shows would be significant. These interviews would reveal what social and cultural messages, if any, the writers and producers intended to present through these characters. A comparison of these interviews with audience results would be significant in examining the effects of social and cultural values on the presentation and the interpretation of television characters, supporting my hypothesis that television does play a part in our social and cultural values, especially gender definitions, although it does not create them.

## **Bibliography**

- Ang, Ien. "Melodramatic Identifications: Television Fiction and Women's Fantasy," Brown, M.E., ed. Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular. Sage Publications: Newbury Park, CA. 1990.
- Baehr, Helen and Dyer, Gillian, eds. Boxed In: Women and Television. Routledge: London, England. 1987.
- Bolotin, Susan. "Voices from the Postfeminist Generation," New York Times Magazine. Oct. 17, 1982: 29-31+.
- Bonderoff, Jason. "Amanda marries Scarecrow! J.R. takes out the trash! Crockett shaves! That's how certain series would end if some stars had their way," TV Guide. June 14, 1986, v34. p. 16(4)
- Bordo, Susan. "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-scepticism," Nicholson, L.J., ed. Feminism and Postmodernism. Routledge: London, England. 1990.
- Brown, Mary Ellen, ed. "Feminist Cultural Television Criticism – Culture, Theory and Practice," Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular. Sage Publications: Newbury Park, CA. 1990.
- Brown, Mary Ellen, ed. "Consumption and Resistance – The Problem of Pleasure," Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular. Sage Publications: Newbury Park, CA. 1990.
- Brownstein, Rachel M. Becoming a Heroine. Viking Press: New York, NY. 1982.
- Brunsdon, Charlotte. "Television: Aesthetics and Audiences," Mellencamp, Patricia, ed. Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism. Indiana University Press: Indianapolis, IN. 1990. pp. 59-72.
- Byars, Jackie. "Reading Feminine Discourse: Prime-Time Television in the United States," Communication, Vol. 9, 1987. pp. 289-303.
- Clark, Danae. "Cagney & Lacey: Feminist Strategies of Detection," Marris, Paul; Thornham, Sue, eds. Media Studies. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, Scotland. 1996.

- Condit, Celeste. "The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy," Avery, Robert K. and Eason, David, eds. Critical Perspectives on Media and Society. Guilford Press: New York, NY. 1991.
- Conrad, Peter. Television: The Medium and its Manners. Routledge: London, England. 1982.
- Dambrot, Faye; Reep, Diana; Bell, Daniel. "Television Sex Roles in the 1980s," Sex Roles, Vol. 19, September 1988. pp. 387-401.
- Davis, Natalie. "Women on Top," Society and Culture in Early Modern France. Stanford University Press: Stanford, CN. 1965.
- Dow, Bonnie. Prime-Time Feminism. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA. 1996.
- Dowell, Pat. "Ladies Night," American Film, Vol. 10, January/February 1985. pp. 44-49.
- Fiske, John. "Television: Polysemy and Popularity," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, Vol. 3, 1986. pp. 391-408.
- Fiske, John. Television Culture. Routledge: New York, NY. 1994.
- Fretts, Bruce. "Superpower! In one of many heavyweight matchups, 'Lois and Clark' strong-armed 'Seaquest'," Entertainment Weekly, June 2, 1995 (277). p. 14.
- Gamman, Lorraine. "Watching the Detectives: The Enigma of the Female Gaze," The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture. Women's Press: London, England. 1988.
- Gensler, Howard. "Rx for 'Lois & Clark' lows," TV Guide. Dec. 14, 1996, v44 n50 p9.
- Gerbner, George. "Television: The New State Religion," Et Cetera, June 1977. pp. 2142-2153.
- Gilligan, Carol. "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," Feminism and Methodology. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IN. 1987.
- Gitlin, Todd. "Prime Time Ideology: The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment," Social Problems, Vol. 26, 1979. pp. 251-265.

- Gronbeck, Bruce. "The Academic Practice of Television Criticism" (book review), Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 74, August 1988. pp. 334-347.
- Harding, Sandra, "Introduction," Feminism and Methodology. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IN. 1987.
- Hicks, Jack. "Why I get so crazy and start yellin'," TV Guide. Feb. 11, 1984, v32. p. 14(4).
- Hiltbrand, David. "*Lois and Clark: the new adventures of Superman* (program review)" People Weekly, Sept. 20, 1993. Vol. 40. p. 12.
- Hirsch, Paul M. and Newcomb, Horace. "Television as a Cultural Forum: Implications for Research," Quarterly Review of Film Studies, Vol. 8, 1983. pp. 45-56.
- Humm, Maggie. Dictionary of Feminist Theory. Ohio State University Press: Columbus, OH. 1990.
- Japp, P.M. "Gender and Work in the 1990s: TV's Working Women," Women's Studies in Communication, Vol. 14, Spring 1991. pp. 49-74.
- Jarvis, Jeff. "*Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (program review)," TV Guide. June 4, 1994, v42 n23 p6.
- Jones, Amelia. "Postfeminism, Feminist Pleasures, and Embodied Theories of Art," Frueh, Joanna; et. al., eds. New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action. Icon Editions: New York, NY. 1994.
- Joyrich, Lynne. "Critical and Textual Hypermasculinity," Mellencamp, Patricia, ed. Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism. Indiana University Press: Indianapolis, IN. 1990. pp. 156-172.
- Kaminer, Wendy. "Whither Feminism? Feminism's Identity Crisis," Current, January 1994, no. 359. pp. 4 (9).
- Kaminer, Wendy. "Feminism's Third Wave: What Do Young Women Want?" New York Times Book Review, June 4, 1995. p. 3.
- Kenny, Glenn. "Love, Metropolis style," TV Guide. April 22, 1995, v43 n16 p43.
- Kleinberg, S. J., "From the Corn Mothers to Starship Enterprise: Gender in American Studies," Journal of American Studies, Vol. 28, April 1994. pp. 91-102.

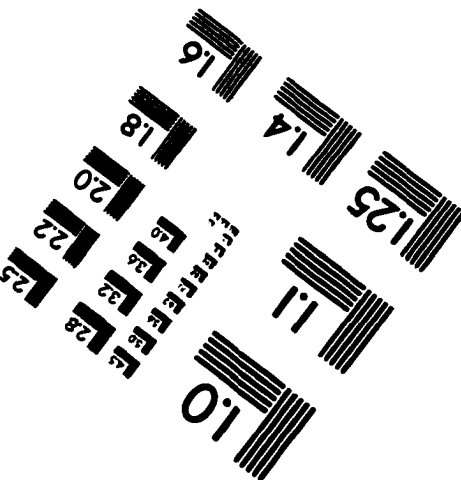
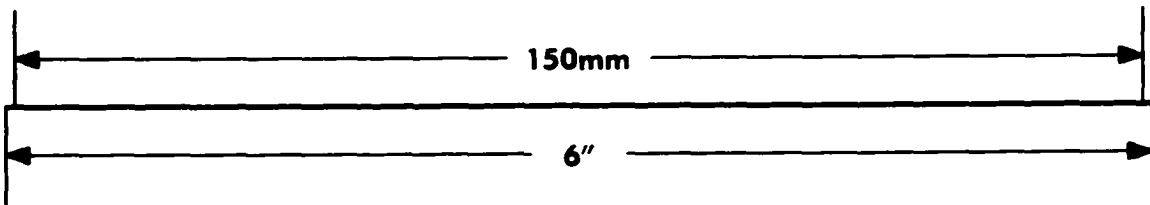
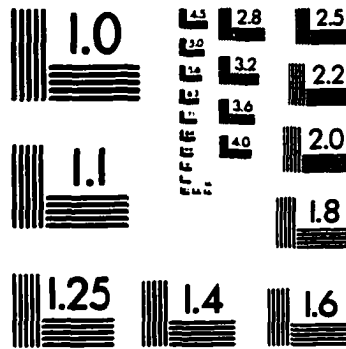
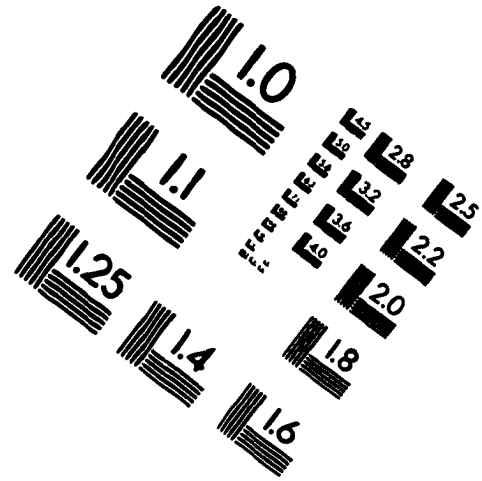
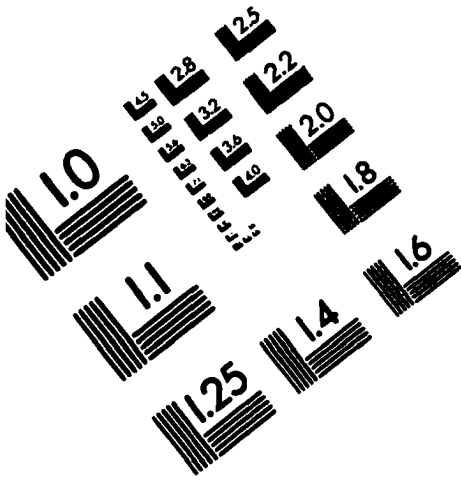


- Kramarae, Cheris and Treichler, Paula A. A Feminist Dictionary. Pandora Press: Boston, MA. 1985.
- Kuhn, Annette. "The Power of the Image," Marris, Paul; Thornham, Sue, eds. Media Studies. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, Scotland. 1996.
- Leibes, T. and Katz, E. "Patterns of Involvement in Television Fiction: A Comparative Analysis," European Journal of Communication, Vol. 1, 1986. pp. 151-171.
- Leonard, John. "Scarecrow and Mrs. King (program review)" New York, January 16, 1984. Vol. 17, p. 66.
- Lesage, Julia. "The Hegemonic Female Fantasy," Film Reader, Vol. 5, 1982. pp. 83-94.
- Lochte, Dick. "Scarecrow and Mrs. King (program review)" Los Angeles Magazine, September 1983. Vol. 28, p. 142.
- Long, Elizabeth, "Feminism and Cultural Studies: Britain and America," Cultural Studies in Mass Communication, Vol. 6, 1989. pp. 427-435.
- Lury, Celia. "The rights and wrongs of culture: issues of theory and methodology," Skeggs, Beverley. ed. Feminist Cultural Theory. Manchester University Press: New York, NY. 1995.
- Macdonald, Myra. Representing Women: Myths of femininity in the popular media. Edward Arnold Publishers: New York, NY. 1993.
- Marin, Richard T. "Super chat," TV Guide. Nov. 6, 1993, v41 p28.
- Mattelart, Michele. "Women and the cultural industries," Collins, Richard; et. al., eds. Media Culture & Society: a critical reader. Sage Publications: London, England. 1986.
- McConnell, Frank D. "Lois and Clark: the new adventures of Superman (program review)" Commonweal, Vol. 121, June 17, 1994. pp. 22-23.
- McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA. 1995.
- Mellencamp, Patricia, ed. "Prologue," Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism. Indiana University Press: Indianapolis, IN. 1990.
- Morley, Diane. Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies. Routledge, London, England. 1992.

- Nashawaty, Chris. "Crash landing (television show *Lois and Clark* ratings fall)," Entertainment Weekly, Oct. 18, 1996 (349). p. 8.
- Pearce, Lynne. "Finding a place from which to write: the methodology of feminist textual practice," Skeggs, Beverley. ed. Feminist Cultural Theory. Manchester University Press: New York, NY. 1995.
- Postman, Neil. Amusing Ourselves to Death. Penguin Books: New York, NY. 1985.
- Press, Andrea. "Class and Gender in the Hegemonic Process," Media Culture and Society, Vol. 11, April 1989. pp. 229-251.
- Press, Andrea. Women Watching Television. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA. 1991.
- Rapp, Rayna. "Is the Legacy of Second Wave Feminism Postfeminism?" Socialist Review, Vol. 18, 1988. pp. 31-37.
- Reep, Diana and Dambrot, Faye. "Having it all? Career conflicts for TV's Women," Journal of Studies in Technical Careers. Vol. 9, Summer, 1987. pp. 217-223.
- Reep, Diana and Dambrot, Faye. "Television's professional women: Working with men in the 1980s," Journalism Quarterly. Vol. 64, Summer/Autumn, 1987. pp. 376-381.
- Reep, Diana and Dambrot, Faye. "In the eye of the beholder: Viewer perceptions of TV's male/female working partners," Communication Research. Vol. 15, February, 1988. pp. 51-69.
- Rense, Rip. "How could a homemaker ever be an interesting woman?" TV Guide. Feb. 23. 1985, v33. p. 30(4).
- "Scarecrow and Mrs. King (program review)" People Weekly, Oct. 3, 1983. Vol. 20, p. 9.
- Steenland, Sally. "Women and Television in the Eighties," Television Quarterly. Vol. 24, Summer 1990. pp. 53-60.
- Swetkey, Benjamin. "Sunday (previews of the new Sunday television series)," Entertainment Weekly, Sept. 17, 1993 (188). p. 18.

- Tedesco, Nancy S. "Patterns in Prime Time," Journal of Communication, Vol. 24, 1974. pp. 119-124.
- Terrace, Vincent. Encyclopedia of Television: Series, Pilots and Specials (1937-73). New York Zoetrope: New York, NY. 1986.
- Terrace, Vincent. Encyclopedia of Television: Series, Pilots and Specials (1947-84). New York Zoetrope: New York, NY. 1985.
- Tucker, Ken. "*Lois and Clark: the new adventures of Superman* (program review)" Entertainment Weekly, Sept. 24, 1993 (189). p. 76.
- Vande Berg, Leah and Streckfuss, Diane. "Prime-Time Television's Portrayal of Women and the World of Work: A Demographic Profile," Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Vol. 36, Spring 1991. pp. 195-208.
- Werts, Diane. "Should Lois marry Clark?" TV Guide. July 22, 1995, v43 n29 p14(3).
- Wilcox, Rhonda V. "Dominant Female, Superior Male: control schemata in *Lois and Clark*, *Moonlighting*, and *Remington Steele*," Journal of Popular Film and Television, Vol. 24, Spring 1996. pp. 26-33.
- Williams, Raymond. "'Mass Communication' and 'Minority Culture'," Marris, Paul; Thornham, Sue, eds. Media Studies. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, Scotland. 1996.
- Williamson, Judith. "Woman Is an Island: Femininity and Colonization," Studies In Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IL. 1986.
- "Women fare better on TV in '84 season (annual review by National Commission on Working Women)" Broadcasting. Vol. 107, December 10, 1984. pp. 84-85.
- Woollacott, Janet. "Fictions and Ideologies: The Case of Situation Comedy," Marris, Paul; Thornham, Sue, eds. Media Studies. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, Scotland. 1996.
- Wright, Charles R. Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective. Random House: New York, NY. 1986.

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc  
1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14609 USA  
Phone: 716/482-0300  
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved

